Sūrah al-Aḥzāb

Central Theme of the Sūrah, Relationship with the Group and Period of Revelation

Just as Sūrah al-Nūr is the last *sūrah* of its group, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb too is the last *sūrah* of the whole group which began from Sūrah al-Furqān. As explained before, this group validates prophethood and the Qur'ān. In consideration of this, there are some very prominent aspects of this *sūrah* that are worth noting:

i. The Prophet (sws) is directed to fulfill the responsibility of Messengerhood imposed on him by God without caring for the reproaches of people.

ii. The distinctive status he occupies among prophets and messengers of God is stated.

iii. The nature of his relationship with the Muslim *ummah* and his rights and their implications on them are explained.

iv. The status of his wives among Muslims and his special relationship with them is elucidated.

v. A reference to a great responsibility entrusted to man by the Almighty and which is explained by Him in His book. A reminder is sounded of the rights and obligations this great responsibility entails.

This *sūrah* was revealed in the period when men and women among the Hypocrites had launched a malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) on the false pretext of some reformatory measures suggested by the Qur'ān. They even tried to poison the minds of his wives. Also alluded to in this *sūrah* is the mischief and pranks they spread during the battle of Aḥzāb (5 AH) to cause frustration and aversion among Muslims. In this regard, the true picture of what happened between Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) and Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) is also depicted because this incident too like the incident of *ifk* already mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr was used by the Hypocrites to spread negative propaganda.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): It is emphasized on the Prophet (sws) that whatever is revealed to him from God should be communicated by him to others without caring for any reproaches of people. He should completely ignore the oppositions campaign launched by the Hypocrites. God is the helper and the protector. He should trust Him.

Verses (4-6): Measures are stated to reform the customs of *ẓihār* and adopted children found in the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. Both have no relation with the norms of sense and reason. However much the opponents may raise a clamour against these measures should not be a cause of any bother or concern. These customs are self-fabrications of these people. God wants to cleanse the contradictions found in our social life and bring it in line with the right course of human nature. Muslims are directed to attribute adopted children to their actual fathers. If their fathers are not known, they should have the status of their allies and brethren and must not be regarded as their own children. Whatever has happened till then under the influence of *jāhiliyyah* has been forgiven by God. However, after this explanation no option remains to cling to these customs. The greatest status and right in an Islamic society is that of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). His wives are mothers of the believers. The status of nearness of other blood relatives is in accordance with the law the Almighty has stated in His Book.

Verses (7-8): The Almighty has bound each prophet with the firm promise that he should only invite people to the religion of God in all circumstances. In this matter, neither should they show deference to anyone nor care about the opposition of anyone so that this attitude of his can become a yardstick between the pure and impure, the sincere and the Hypocrite and each person is rewarded or punished according to his deeds.

Verses (9-27): Concise comments are made on the events of the Battle of the Ditch. The purpose is to deeply engender trust and confidence in God to which the very first verse of the *sūrah* urges. In spite of the fact that the disbelievers had attacked Madīnah with all their allies and the Hypocrites too went all out to defeat the Muslims through their conspiracies and connivances, the Almighty helped Muslims through His divine forces and their enemies were routed.

The message is that if like this Muslims continue to adhere to the religion of God and remain sincere companions of His Messenger in spite of all this opposition, God will help them at every front.

Verses (28-35): After urging the Muslims to obey the Prophet (sws) as a unit, the pure wives of the Prophet (sws) are addressed and explained the responsibilities their status entails: because of the relationship with Muḥammad (sws) they will hold a high position if they fulfill their responsibilities and their punishment is also very stern if they are guilty of any defiance. Their real obligation is obedience and loyalty to the Prophet (sws) and spreading the radiance of Qur'ānic guidance being taught to them by him. Hence it only is befitting for them to stay put in their homes with full grace. They should also try to protect themselves from the influence of the men and women among the Hypocrites who taking advantage of their benevolence want to lure them to become their beloveds. God wants that the wives of the Prophet (sws) remain cleansed of all types of filth and devote themselves for the education and dissemination of the Qur'ānic teachings of law and wisdom.

Verses (36-40): A brief comment is made on the marriage between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta). What is said foremost in this regard is that no believing man or woman has the right to say anything in a matter decided by God and His Messenger. They have the greatest right on the believers. After this, Zayd's incident is referred to. The Prophet (sws) wanted to elevate his status but Zayd (rta) could not pull along the marriage, and divorced his wife in spite of the Prophet's insistence not to do so. After this marriage was proposed by the Prophet (sws), men and women among the Hypocrites started taunting Zaynab (rta) by saying that the Prophet (sws) had committed a great oppression by proposing a lady of noble origin for a freed slave. Even after these taunts, Zaynab (rta) continued to pull along with Zayd (rta) with patience and gratitude. Yet Zayd (rta) because of his personal opinion divorced her. Details are forthcoming. This naturally became a great source of grief for Zaynab (rta). The only way the Prophet (sws) could think of healing her wound was to marry her but he feared that this would create great commotion and propaganda. Zayd (rta) was known as the adopted child of the Prophet (sws) and in the Arab *jāhiliyyah* adopted sons were accorded the same status as real sons. The Prophet's adversaries

would make his marriage with Zaynab a means to spread propaganda and mischief that in the first place he married off a lady of noble origin to a freed slave who was his adopted son and later himself married this wife of his adopted son. Moreover, it had already been revealed in the Qur'ān that polygamy should be restricted to four wives. So the Prophet (sws) was hesitant in marrying anyone. However, the Almighty directed him to marry Zaynab (rta) by disregarding all these fears so this marriage could eradicate an evil custom of the age of *jāhiliyyah*.

Verses (41-48): Muslims are directed to engage themselves as much as possible in remembering the Almighty. The advent of the Prophet (sws) is a manifestation of the great mercy of God to them in order to lead them from the darkness of polytheism and disbelief to the radiance of faith and religion. If they give due regard to this radiance, they will succeed both in this world and in that to come. The Prophet (sws) is then addressed and told that he is a witness of God's religion before His creation. He should give glad tidings of Paradise to those who accept this testimony, and inform those who reject it that Hell shall be their abode. He is a divine caller from God and a lamp of guidance to lead people out from the darkness of polytheism and disbelief. He should continue to fervently discharge this obligation, and should not care about the adversity of the Hypocrites and disregard the harm they cause.

Verses (49-52): It is declared that all of the Prophet's wives are legally allowed to him. The restriction of four is not meant for him the way it is for others. Yet there are certain other restrictions on him in this regard which are not for the rest. Reference is made to the reason that the Prophet (sws) is given this specific latitude. The wives of the Prophet (sws) are told to follow this verdict of God. The Hypocrites are warned that by spreading mischief and disinformation about the wives of the Prophet (sws) they should not be a source of bother for the Prophet (sws).

Verses (43-62): People are stopped from entering the house of the Prophet (sws) without asking permission. His wives and those of the Muslims are directed to cover themselves when they go out of their homes. This will not provide any opportunity to the Hypocrites to tease and harass them. In this regard, the Hypocrites are sounded a final warning that if they do not desist from their ill-ways and pranks,

very soon final directives will be revealed to rout them. After that, they will not find refuge anywhere.

Verses (63-73): This is the concluding section of the *sūrah*. First, people are reminded of the Day of Judgement that they should not regard it to be far off. It is looming on their heads. On that day, no one will be of any benefit to another. Leaders and their followers who had gone astray will mutually curse one another.

The Hypocrites are warned to give up blindly following the Jews who had harassed Moses (sws) at every step. Finally, God gave death to Moses (sws) with dignity and respect and cursed those had harassed him. They should keep fearing God and adopt the attitude of "we listened and we obeyed." God will set right their deeds and forgive their sins. This path is the path of great success.

At the end, a reminder is sounded of the great trust and covenant which only human beings were considered worthy of among all creation of God. On this trust and covenant rests all the dignity of human beings. If they fulfill the obligation they owe to it, they will rise to the highest status and if they fail in this, then no one will be more unfortunate than they.

Section I Verses (1-8)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّهَا النَّبِیُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَ لَا تُطِعِ الۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِیۡمًا حَكِیۡمًا ۙ﴿۱﴾ وَّ اتَّبِعۡ مَا یُوۡحٰۤی
اِلَیۡكَ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِیۡرًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّ تَوَكَّلۡ عَلَی اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ وَكِیۡلًا ﴿۳﴾ مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ
لِرَجُلٍ مِّنۡ قَلۡبَیۡنِ فِیۡ جَوۡفِهٖ ۚ وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَزۡوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔیۡ تُظٰهِرُوۡنَ مِنۡهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ ۚ وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَدۡعِیَآءَكُمۡ
اَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكُمۡ قَوۡلُكُمۡ بِاَفۡوَاهِكُمۡ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ یَقُوۡلُ الۡحَقَّ وَ هُوَ یَهۡدِی السَّبِیۡلَ ﴿۴﴾ اُدۡعُوۡهُمۡ لِاٰبَآئِهِمۡ هُوَ اَقۡسَطُ
عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اٰبَآءَهُمۡ فَاِخۡوَانُكُمۡ فِی الدِّیۡنِ وَ مَوَالِیۡكُمۡ ؕ وَ لَیۡسَ عَلَیۡكُمۡ جُنَاحٌ فِیۡمَاۤ اَخۡطَاۡتُمۡ بِهٖ
وَ لٰكِنۡ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِیۡمًا ﴿۵﴾ اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوۡلٰی بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَ اَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ
اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ ؕ وَ اُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُهُمۡ اَوۡلٰی بِبَعۡضٍ فِیۡ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُهٰجِرِیۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَفۡعَلُوۡۤا اِلٰۤی
اَوۡلِیٰٓـئِكُمۡ مَّعۡرُوۡفًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِی الۡكِتٰبِ مَسۡطُوۡرًا ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِذۡ اَخَذۡنَا مِنَ النَّبِیّٖنَ مِیۡثَاقَهُمۡ وَ مِنۡكَ وَ مِنۡ نُّوۡحٍ وَّ
اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ وَ مُوۡسٰی وَ عِیۡسَی ابۡنِ مَرۡیَمَ ۪ وَ اَخَذۡنَا مِنۡهُمۡ مِّیۡثَاقًا غَلِیۡظًا ۙ﴿۷﴾ لِّیَسۡـَٔلَ الصّٰدِقِیۡنَ عَنۡ صِدۡقِهِمۡ ۚ
وَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ عَذَابًا اَلِیۡمًا ﴿۸﴾

O Prophet! Have fear of God and disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, Wise. And follow what is being revealed from your Lord. Indeed, God is aware of all that you do. And trust God. And sufficient a trust is God. (1-3)

God has not put two hearts within any person's chest nor has made the wives whom you do *ẓiḥār* with as your mothers, nor made your adopted sons as your own sons. All these are mere words which your mouths utter and God declares the truth and guides to the right path. Call your adopted sons after their fathers. This is more just in the sight of God. And if you are not aware of their fathers, regard them as your brothers in Faith and as allies to your tribe. The mistake you have made in this regard shall be forgiven, but you will be held accountable for what your hearts have firmly intended. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (4-5)

The right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another and the wives of the Prophet are their mothers, and that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat

your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book. (6)

And remember when We took a covenant from the prophets and also from you and from Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus son of Mary as well. A solemn covenant We took from them so that God might question the truthful about their truthfulness [and the disbelievers and Hypocrites about their disbelief and hypocrisy] and for the disbelievers, He has prepared a woeful punishment. (7-8)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۝[1]

The Prophet (sws) is addressed here with the title النَّبِيُّ not merely out of respect as has been generally understood. He has actually been addressed in this way to remind him of his status and position. In other words, since he is God's prophet and messenger, he should only care about God. He should only fear God and disregard the opposition of the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. An example of such an address can be seen in Sūrah al-Mā'idah: (٥: ٦٧) يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (O Prophet! Fully communicate to them what the Almighty has revealed to you, (5:67)).

The Prophet (sws) has not been reprimanded here by asking him to disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites for there was a chance that he may succumb to their awe and dread; on the contrary, the direction of the reprimand is towards his opponents though he is apparently addressed. He should not yield to any of the mischief worked and pressure exerted by them. It may be kept in mind that the succeeding verses will mention certain events and incidents which the disbelievers and the hypocrites had used to work mischief.

Here, the reason that the disbelievers and the Hypocrites are mentioned together is that both primarily belong to the same evil stock. Both are united in their stand against Islam. The only difference is that one group expresses open enmity against Islam and the other enters into the folds of Islam by becoming part of it and then tries to sever its roots. Hence, there is no difference between the two as far as the end result is concerned. On the contrary, it is evident

---

1. O Prophet! Have fear of God and disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, Wise.

from the Qur'ān that the Hypocrites will be in the deepest level of Hell.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا state why a messenger of God should disregard everyone and fear no one except his Lord: God is All-Knowing and Wise. Hence if He has directed us to do something it must be based on true knowledge and wisdom. Whatever nonsensical talk its opponents are indulging in is not worthy of being taken notice of. Verse 39 and verse 48 will further explain this.

وَّاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۳﴾[2]

What is said earlier in a negative way is repeated here in a positive one: while paying no heed to the pranks worked by the mischief mongers, the Prophet (sws) should follow the divine revelations sent to him from his Lord and rest assured that all his deeds and measures are in His notice. It may be noted that the first address in this verse is in the singular (اتَّبِعْ) and later changed to plural (تَعْمَلُوْنَ). This signifies the fact that the Prophet (sws) is addressed here as the representative of his people. It is evident from this style that Muslims too must give this regard to the Prophet (sws) in matters of religion.

The words وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا imply that when every work of God is based on knowledge and wisdom and He is also aware of everything, then the Prophet (sws) should trust Him and adhere to his stance. God is sufficient enough to be trusted alone. The Prophet (sws) does not need any support in His presence. The word وَكِيْلٌ has already been explained at another place in this exegesis. It refers to someone who can be fully trusted and to whom all matters can be consigned as a result. God requires of His servants to follow His directives come what may and trust Him that whatever difficulties they may face in His cause, they will not be left alone by Him; they will be granted help and support by Him to deal with these difficulties.

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهٖ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔيْ تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ

2. And follow what is being revealed from your Lord. Indeed, God is aware of all that you do. And trust God. And sufficient a trust is God.

اَدْعِيَآءَكُمْ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ ۝[3]

After the earlier introductory verses, coming up are certain issues in which certain reforms were suggested by the Qur'ān and the disbelievers and the Hypocrites launched a malicious campaign against these the Prophet (sws) with reference to these reforms.

The words مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِىْ جَوْفِهٖ serve as a prelude to what is mentioned later. Since what is mentioned later reflects a contradiction of thought and intention hence what contradiction of intention stands for is discussed first. Had the Almighty wanted that a person remain entangled in the conflict of contradictory and clashing intentions, He would have blessed him with more than one heart; yet He did not even give him two hearts. The obvious meaning of this is that He did not like that a person become a target of contradictory thoughts and intentions. However, it is a strange aspect of man's intellect that contrary to the way God has created him he becomes an amalgam of contradictory thoughts and intentions. Thus, on the one hand, he claims to believe in God and, on the other hand, ascribes partners to Him. Similarly, on the one hand, he pledges to obey God's messenger, while, on the other hand, connives with his enemies and conspires against his teachings. The fact is that if he has one heart, then his thoughts and intentions too must not be contradictory. They should in fact be in complete harmony and accord. If the situation is to the contrary, then this only shows that a person's heart is contaminated and sick and it is the duty of every sane person to redress this state of affairs and create harmony between his thoughts.

An example of this contradiction of thought is mentioned by the words وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔىْ تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ which state that if a person expresses *ẓihār* with his wife, then this does not make his wife his mother yet in the days of *jāhiliyyah* people regarded such women to be prohibited to them the way mothers are. When the Qur'ān made its intent clear to reform this custom, the Hypocrites and disbelievers started the malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) that

3. God has not put two hearts within any person's chest nor has made the wives whom you do *ẓiḥār* with as your mothers, nor made your adopted sons as your own sons. All these are mere words which your mouths utter and God declares the truth and guides to the right path.

women who were prohibited to people for marriage had been made allowed by him and his followers.

Ẓihār is a term of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. If a person uttered the words اَنْتَ عَلَيَّ كَظَهْرِ اُمِّي (you are now prohibited to me the way my mother's back is), his wife would become eternally prohibited to him. It is from the word ظَهْر (back) that the term *ẓihār* (ظِهَارٌ) has originated. However, its application is not confined to using precisely this word. If a person regards any other limb of a wife to be prohibited to him and through it insinuates the connotation of prohibition, then this will also be considered as *ẓihār*. In the Arab *jāhiliyyah*, this would connote an irrevocable divorce. The Qur'ān (58:2-4) regarded it to be an evil and a lie and permitted a believer who had uttered it to revoke it and become intimate with the wife once again. However, to atone for such a heinous utterance does not make a wife a person's mother; however, since he has uttered a false and evil thing, he should liberate a slave. If a slave is not available, he should fast for two consecutive months and if this is also not possible for him, then he should feed sixty poor people. Through this reformatory measure the Qur'ān has guided people to save their family lives from disruption who in frenzy and anger utter nonsensical words without realizing their consequences. At the same time, this guidance was meant to warn them and others to follow it in future as well. However, the disbelievers and the Hypocrites who were always on the look out to create the slightest ground for opposing the Prophet (sws) started spreading the vicious propaganda that this person is not differentiating between mother and wife. It is this very propaganda that this verse has referred to: these people are inflicted with the malady of contradictory thoughts and conflicting ideas, otherwise they should think that how can such ignorance and nonsensical utterance equate a mother with a wife. He definitely deserves to be punished and reformed on this blemish so that he and other people learn a lesson but he does not deserve that his family life should be ruined. Here, I will content myself to these brief comments because the Qur'ān too has shown brevity here. God willing, in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Mujādalah, I will dwell in detail on this issue and explain the evils of this methodology of divorce as against the divorce methodology suggested by the Qur'ān, which has actually addressed these evils.

A similar contradiction of thought inflicts people regarding adopted sons. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, they occupied the same status as real sons. It was not possible for any person to marry the wife of his adopted son after his death or after her divorce. This custom was totally against the natural familial system founded by Islam on the principal of وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ (٦:٣٣) (blood relations are closer to one another than to others (33:6)). Hence, when the time arrived for the reformation of this custom, the Almighty Himself directed the Prophet (sws) to marry Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) the divorcee of Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta), his adopted son. The most effective way this custom could have been eradicated was that the Prophet (sws) himself take this measure. However, the disbelievers and the Hypocrites made this a means of spreading malicious propaganda against him by saying that he has married the wife of his adopted son. While referring to this propaganda, the Qur'ān has stated equating real sons to adopted sons as another manifestation of their contradictory thoughts. They accord equal status to both. Detailed discussion is coming up on this issue later in the *sūrah*. Hence, I will content myself to this brief comment.

The words ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ الْحَقَّ وَ هُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ imply that such nonsensical utterances are concocted by their tongues. They have no relation to sense and reason and divine directives. Hence they are baseless. Through His messengers and books, God is guiding them towards the truth and towards the straight path of human nature. So they should adopt this straight path and give up the customs and innovations of the era of *jāhiliyyah*.

اُدْعُوْهُمْ لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ هُوَ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَ مَوَالِيْكُمْ ۚ وَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَآ اَخْطَاْتُمْ بِهٖ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ۚ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۝[4]

The verse states that adopted sons should be called after the names of

4. Call your adopted sons after their fathers. This is more just in the sight of God. And if you are not aware of their fathers, regard them as your brothers in Faith and as allies to your tribe. The mistake you have made in this regard shall be forgiven, but you will be held accountable for what your hearts have firmly intended. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

their fathers so that their real lineage is known. This is more akin to truth and justice in the law of God. If they disobey this directive by equating adopted sons to real sons, then the whole system of inheritance, mutual relationships and socials connection will be disrupted. This system is based on blood relations and on the feelings of affiliation found in human nature. God has founded all the directives of Islam, whichever sphere they may belong to, on justice and fairness. Hence, nothing in them should be against justice and fairness.

The words فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اٰبَآءَهُمۡ فَاِخۡوَانُكُمۡ فِى الدِّيۡنِ وَمَوَالِيۡكُمۡ state that if the fathers of these adopted sons are not known, then they should be regarded as brothers in religion and *mawālī*. It was Islam which first introduced the Arabs to the concept of religious brotherhood. Yet they did have in them a way to associate a person with tribes and families. It was called *ḥilf* or *wilā*. If an outsider wanted to be included in a family or a tribe, he could be accommodated and would then be called *mawlā* (singular of *mawālī*) of the tribe. He would then have the same rights and obligations as real members of that tribe. If he was killed, the family or tribe to which he was a *mawlā* would have the right to demand *qiṣāṣ*. Similarly, if he undertook something that imposed some responsibility on him, then the family and tribe would share this responsibility. مولی القوم منهم (The *mawlā* of a nation will be regarded its part) was an established principle among the Arabs. It is evident from this verse that Islam also kept this principle intact. The *wilā* of a liberated slave of a family would also belong to that family. For example, if the liberated slave died and he had no heir then because of *wilā* his inheritance would be given to the liberator. This verse also alludes to the fact that if the father of an adopted son is not known, then he will be regarded as a brother in religion. However, he will not be regarded as the real son.

The words وَلَيۡسَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ جُنَاحٌ فِيۡمَاۤ اَخۡطَاۡتُمۡ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنۡ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا imply that the mistake that has been committed till then in this regard out of ignorance would not entail accountability. Yet, if insistence on this wrong custom is persisted with then this will turn it into a crime. This is because now it will be willful and God holds such willful mistakes as accountable.

اَلنَّبِىُّ اَوۡلٰى بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ وَاُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُهُمۡ اَوۡلٰى بِبَعۡضٍ فِىۡ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ۭ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا ۝[5]

This verse explains the degree of status relatives and certain personalities hold. The purpose is to save Muslims from blemishes – some examples of which have been stated earlier in the *sūrah*.

The word اَوْلٰى means "having more right" as in: اِنَّ اَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ (٣: ٦٨) (those who followed Abraham are more entitled to ascribe themselves to him, (3:68)). In other words, the right the Prophet (sws) has on a Muslim is the greatest in relation to what he has for others. So much so, this right is even greater than his own life. This aspect is discussed later in the *sūrah* in the following words:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا (٣٣:٣٦)

It is not possible for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter to have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed far in error. (33:36)

It is evident from this that in matters in which God and His Messenger have given a ruling, it must be obeyed by all believers without any hesitation. A messenger is an envoy of God and speaks in this very capacity. Hence, a necessary requirement of faith in this regard is that believing men and women should obey him without any hesitation just as they obey God. They should neither care about the opposition or hindrance offered by others nor their own interests or their own life and wealth.

The words وَاَزْوَاجُهٗٓ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ express the special natural consequence of this relationship which a believer has or should have with God's messenger. If there is no trace of hypocrisy in this relationship, then every Muslim will naturally have the same feelings for the wives of the Prophet (sws) as decent sons have for their mothers. Such is the

5. The right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another and the wives of the Prophet are their mothers, and that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book.

respect and awe they command because of a believer's relation with the Prophet (sws) that no one can even think of marrying them. If anyone, it is the Hypocrites who can think to the contrary. They would even spread mischief and indulge in conspiracies to fulfill their objectives, as shall be explained ahead. This verse actually put an end to this mischief mongering and later on this basis of prohibition of marriage with them was expressed in explicit words: وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا (۳۳: ۵۳) (And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him, (33:53)). Readers may confine themselves to this brief allusion. Later, I shall dwell upon the religious benefits that are concealed in this prohibition.

After mentioning the distinctive status of the Prophet (sws) and his wives and the aspect which grants them this status, the words وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ point to the principle already mentioned in Sūrah al-Nisā' which forms the basis regarding all other relationships. According to this principle, blood relations will have rights on one another on the basis of closeness. The words فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ refer to verses 7-13 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which the law of inheritance is mentioned in accordance with this principle.

The words مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ state that in contrast to other believers and the *muhājirūn*, blood relatives are more close to a believer. This verse also abrogated the system of sharing rights between the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* that was set up earlier on the basis of Islamic brotherhood.

The words اِلَّآ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا refer to the fact that after this what could be done was that those relatives of a person who were not his heirs could be dealt with in a kindly manner within the limits stipulated by the *sharī'ah*. These limits have already been stipulated in Sūrah al-Nisā'. The words كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا point to this.

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۠ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ۙ﴿۷﴾[6]

6. And remember when We took a covenant from the prophets and also from you and from Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus son of Mary as well. A solemn covenant We took from them.

In verses 1-2, the Prophet (sws) was directed to follow what is being revealed to him while disregarding every fear and at the end of this section the directive of inviting people to this revelation is further strengthened through the history of the prophets of God. The implication is that whatever the Prophet (sws) is being directed to do from God is the same as what other prophets were directed to do. God took the promise from all the prophets to follow what is being revealed to them and to deliver it to the people exactly in the way it was given to them. The verse says that this covenant was taken by God from Muḥammad (sws), Noah (sws), Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws), son of Mary. Naming some messengers of God after a mention of the generic category actually bears reference to the history of prophets. The purpose is that it becomes fully evident that this responsibility was borne by all messengers of God and their companions. The name of Muḥammad (sws) is mentioned the foremost because the real objective is to remind him.

This covenant and promise is referred to in the Qur'ān at various places. In particular, its complete history is stated in Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here referring to the covenant with each messenger will take space; hence, as an example, the covenant with Moses (sws) is being cited: فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّ اْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا (٧: ١٤٥) (Hold fast to it yourself and also ask your people strongly adhere to this best thing, (7:145)).

The words وَ اَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا express the fact that the Almighty was not the slightest lenient in taking this covenant. He took this covenant in all earnestness and emphatically asked people to strongly abide by it. It needs to be kept in mind that in the first place the word covenant (مِّيْثَاق) is used which itself connotes a strong promise and second it has been qualified by the word غَلِيْظ which further bolsters it.

لِّيَسْـَٔلَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ ۚ وَ اَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٨﴾[7]

This verse expresses the underlying wisdom for taking this covenant. It was after this preaching by God's messengers that the

7. So that God might question the truthful about their truthfulness [and the disbelievers and Hypocrites about their disbelief and hypocrisy] and for the disbelievers, He has prepared a woeful punishment.

truth was conclusively communicated to their people. It was only after this happened that the justification was provided to God for questioning the truthful about their truthfulness and the disbelievers and the Hypocrites for their disbelief and hypocrisy. Once this questioning was done, reward and punishment was also justified. Without this conclusive communication of the truth if the Almighty had punished people for their errors and blemishes, this would have been against His justice and mercy. Verses 24 and 37-40 ahead further explain this aspect. The following verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' also refers to this very fact, and have I have explained it there as well: لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّٰهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ (٤: ١٦٥) (so that after them people are left with no excuse which they can present before God, (4:165)).

Section II: Verses (9-27)

The succeeding verses describe the events of the battle of Aḥzāb and the purpose is to make clear to the Muslims in the light of the events of this battle what they were told in the beginning: while pursuing God's cause, the Prophet (sws) and his followers should disregard the opposition of their opponents as well as the conspiracies they hatch; they, on the contrary, should fully trust God as He is sufficient for them in this regard. They have observed from their own eyes how God's help descended on them when all their enemies combined and launched an onslaught against them and the hypocrites among the ranks of the believers too tried to rout them through their conspiracies. Yet God's scheme prevailed and their enemies were totally humbled.

The battle of Aḥzāb took place in Shawwāl 5 AH. Some leaders of the Banū Naḍīr had been exiled from Madīnah to Khaybar by the Prophet (sws). These leaders went to Makkah and pleaded before the leaders of the Quryash and convinced them to attack Madīnah. The Quryash were already making plans for this. So as soon as the Jews induced them to battle, it was as if their hearts' desire was fulfilled. After this, they also lured the leaders of the Banū Ghaṭfān and the Banū Hawāzin into this plan. In this way, a strong army of about 10000 people prepared to attack the Muslims. The army of the Quraysh was led by Abū Sufyān while the Banū Ghaṭfān and the

Banū Hawāzin were led by ‘Uyaynah ibn Ḥafṣ and ‘Āmir ibn Ṭufayl respectively. Moreover, Ḥuyy ibn Akhṭab also convinced the Jews of the Banū Qurayẓah to join this united front. Though they had entered into a pact of no-war with the Prophet (sws), they regarded this to be a God-sent opportunity and ignored the pact. They were about eight hundred in number.

When the Prophet (sws) became aware of this attack, he, on the advice of Salmān Fārisī, had a ditch dug around Madīnah in the directions from where the attack was feared. Thus a 3.5 mile long ditch was dug in the North and the West of the city. Almost three thousand soldiers undertook this task, and the Prophet (sws) himself was part of them.

The enemies laid siege of Madīnah and this siege lasted for one month. During this time, a few sporadic instances of throwing arrows and stones did take place. The enemy understood that the Muslims were fully prepared for the battle. Then the enemy became divided because of dispute and moreover a stormy wind uprooted their camps after which they lost heart and Abū Sūfyān announced their return. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ؕ
وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ۚ﴿۹﴾ اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ
الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ﴿۱۰﴾ هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَ زُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ اِذْ
يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ اِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يٰٓاَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ وَ يَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۛؕ وَ مَا هِيَ
بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ لَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَ مَا تَلَبَّثُوْا
بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا ﴿۱۴﴾ وَ لَقَدْ كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ؕ وَ كَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْئُوْلًا ﴿۱۵﴾ قُلْ
لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَ اِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۶﴾ قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ
يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا نَصِيْرًا
﴿۱۷﴾ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَ الْقَآئِلِيْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۸﴾
اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۚۖ فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ

فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ
كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ
فِى الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٢٠﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِىْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ
اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ ۙ قَالُوْا
هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۫ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّآ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ ۫ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا
﴿٢٣﴾ لِّيَجْزِىَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا
عَزِيْزًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا
تَقْتُلُوْنَ وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

Believers! Remember God's favour to you when you were attacked by armies. So We unleashed upon them a stormy wind and also sent armies which you could not see. And God continuously watches whatever you do. Remember when they attacked you from above and from below and when eyes were awe-struck and hearts leapt up to the throats, and you started to have all sorts of thoughts about God. At that time, the faithful were put to test and were made to reel. (9-11)

And when the Hypocrites and those whose hearts are afflicted with an ailment would say: "The promises of God and His Messenger have turned out to be mere fraud," and when one of their groups said: "O People of Yathrib! You cannot stand much longer; so, turn back." And a group from them sought the Prophet's permission, and would say: "Our homes are unsafe," whereas they were not unsafe. These people only wanted to flee. And if they had been attacked from their sides, then asked to give up faith they would have gladly accepted it and very few from them would have desisted from this. Even though they had promised God that they would not turn their backs and promises made with God will be questioned. Tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will be of no avail to you. You have very little time to enjoy about." Ask [them:] "Who can save you

from God if He wants to harm you or can prevent Him from showing you mercy?" And they will not find for themselves any protector nor helper other than God. (12-17)

God well knows those among you who hold back others and who say to their brothers: "Join us," and seldom have they been taking part in war. They avoid you. Yet when danger befalls them you would see that they look at you with eyes as the eyes of a person that roll around in fear of death. Then when danger goes away, they talk to you with sharp tongues in greed of wealth. These people did not profess faith; so, the Almighty made their deeds go waste. And this is very easy for God. These people are thinking that the groups of the enemy have not left as yet, and if the groups come again they would desire to be in the villages with the Bedouins and keep asking about your news from there. And had they been with you, even then they would have seldom taken part in the battle. (18-20)

Indeed, the life of God's Messenger has the best example for you. For those who hope to meet God and hope for the Hereafter and remember God in abundance. And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience. (21-22)

There are the courageous among the believers who have fulfilled their promise with God. So, some among them have fulfilled their promise and some await to do so, and have not the slightest changed [the promise] so that God may reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants or accept their repentance [if they repent]. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful. (23-24)

And the Almighty routed the angry disbelievers, not letting them achieve their aims. And God became sufficient for the Muslims regarding war and God is Powerful and Dominant. And God brought down from their forts these People of the Book who helped the disbelievers and struck awe in their hearts. Some of them you slay and some you imprison. And made you the inheritors of their land, their houses and their wealth. And there is more land as well which you have not yet set foot upon. And God has power over all things. (25-27)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ۚ﴿۹﴾[8]

The directive given in verse 3 to trust God is further strengthened by citing examples here from history which depict God's help for the Muslims in the near past. At the time of the Battle of the Ditch, the whole of Arabia attacked the Muslims but no harm came to them whatsoever. The Almighty routed the strong armies of their armies and it became evident to everyone that God is sufficient to trust. If His help is there, the opposition of the whole world cannot harm a person.

Consider the words: فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا. It is evident from various narratives that in the last days of the siege a tempestuous wind blew that uprooted the tents of the army. Food pots and cauldrons turned on their faces, animals of conveyance dispersed and in spite of the biting cold it became difficult to light fire. Pitch darkness prevailed all over. This situation struck awe in the hearts of the Muslims and Abū Sufyān sought relief in backing off from the front.

The words وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا express the fact that with the stormy wind, the Almighty sent armies that were invisible to the Muslims. This is a reference to the armies of angels which always accompany the believers. Though they are not visible, their glowing feats manifest themselves. This encourages the believers and intimidates the enemies. Readers may take a look at what I have written in the exegesis Sūrah al-Anfāl while explaining the battle of Badr. It is evident from the words of this verse that Muslims were not able to see these armies but it cannot be construed from this that the disbelievers too did not see them. It is quite probable that they did see these armies as a result of which they reckoned that the Muslim army was large in numbers and this struck awe in their hearts.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا are almost the same as verse 2 earlier:

---

8. Believers! Remember God's favour to you when you were attacked by armies. So, We unleashed upon them a stormy wind and also sent armies which you could not see. And God continuously watches whatever you do.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا. A person can fully trust God if he is convinced that God is بَصِيْرًا (sees all) and خَبِيْرًا (knows all). He is fully aware and informed of the risks and hardships undertaken by the believers.

اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

Consider the part: اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ. It is known that the eastern side of Madīnah is situated on a high ground and the western side on a low one. It is evident from various narratives that the Banū Ghaṭfān and some other tribes had attacked from the eastern side and the Quraysh and their allies attacked from the western side.

Consider the words: وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ. Eyes are not able to continuously stare at a horrible sight. In Arabic, the expression زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ signifies such a situation. Similarly, the idiom بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ also signifies a situation of fear, horror and worry.

Though the words وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا are said in a general way, yet they refer to people weak in faith and inflicted with the ailment of hypocrisy. They were totally taken aback when they witnessed this sight. They began to doubt the promises of God's help and what they had been informed of regarding His majestic works. It will become evident from the gradual progression of the discourse that the reference is to the weak in faith and the Hypocrites. In some later verses, here is how the Qur'ān has praised perseverance and steadfastness of the believers: وَ لَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ قَالُوْا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ مَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا (And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increase their faith and obedience, (33:22)). When this is the state of the true Muslims and obviously the majority of the Muslims consisted of such valiant people, then the verse under discussion can only point to the weak in faith. It is on these very grounds that I regard unreliable the

9. Remember when they attacked you from above and from below and when eyes were awe-struck and hearts leapt up to the throats, and you started to have all sorts of thoughts about God.

narratives found in our books of exegesis which say that at the time of the Battle of the Ditch except for one or two people none among the Muslims could show courage and determination.

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا ﴿١١﴾[10]

The verse says that these circumstances put the believers into a great trial and they were badly jolted. On the one hand, the enemy was attacking from all sides and on the other there were people within their ranks who lost their verve and grit and started to raise various doubts. However, the believers have to pass through such trials in order that the good among them can be made distinct from the evil elements among them.

وَاِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿١٢﴾[11]

What is stated rather concisely earlier by the words وَتَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا is now elaborated upon. The Hypocrites and those who had malice against Islam in their hearts started to spread the propaganda that the promises made by God and His messenger were mere deception. The purpose of this propaganda was to dishearten the Muslims. Some narratives even record this sarcastic remark: "Though Muḥammad (sws) is assuring us that we will acquire the treasures of Persia and Rome, yet here we are; we cannot even go out of our homes to relieve ourselves." Thus, on the one hand, was the siege of the enemy from all sides of the city and on the other, were these Hypocrites spreading this malicious propaganda among them. It this situation which the Qur'ān has depicted thus in verse 11 earlier: وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا.

An academic point is worthy of attention in this verse. It is said: وَاِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ. The question arises: "Do these words mention two separate groups or do they depict two attributes of a single group of Hypocrites?" By studying parallel verses of the Qur'ān, it becomes evident that the word مَّرَضٌ (ailment) is used in the

10. At that time, the faithful were put to test and were made to reel.

11. And when the Hypocrites and those whose hearts are afflicted with a ailment would say: "The promises of God and His Messenger have turned out to be mere fraud."

Qur'ān for two types of moral ailments: hypocrisy and jealousy. When it occurs with the word hypocrisy, as is the case here, it is used in its second meaning. However, when it is used singly, the context and concomitant indications guide us to which shade in meaning it has been used. In some places, it is used in its general meaning of hypocrisy and at some instances, it means jealousy and malice. A usage in this second meaning can be seen in verse 32 ahead of this very *sūrah*. An even more explicit parallel usage occurs in verse 29 of Sūrah Muḥammad.

It may be kept in mind that there were two types of people among the Hypocrites: there were those who were weak in their determination and will power and there were those who had malice and enmity in their hearts against Islam yet did not openly express this enmity. They wanted to harm the Muslims from within and thus were like snakes in their ranks. To make this group distinct from the general category of Hypocrites the attribute وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ (and those who have an ailment in their hearts) is used. People who do not make a distinction between these two groups are not able to understand the true stress of the Qur'ān at some instances.

وَاِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يٰٓاَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ وَيَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۛ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿١٣﴾[12]

This is a mention of another group among the Hypocrites and it is evident from concomitant indications that the reference is to the Bedouins among them. Among those who had professed faith in the suburbs of Madīnah, there was a group of very die-hard Hypocrites. They are mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Tawbah. The words used for them are: اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّ نِفَاقًا. They claimed to be Muslims after being over-awed by its growing political power, yet their sole concern was their vested interests. If a battle would be at hand, they, in the first place, would try to put various excuses and if ever they would pretentiously

12. And when one of their groups said: "O People of Yathrib! You cannot stand much longer; so, turn back." And a group from them sought the Prophet's permission, and would say: "Our homes are unsafe," whereas they were not unsafe. These people only wanted to flee.

participate in it, they would try more to achieve the objective of the enemy. At the time of the Battle of Ditch also, some of them presented their services to conceal their hypocrisy. Yet all their efforts revolved around causing frustration and discouragement among them. Here in these few verses, it is these Hypocrites who are commented upon.

Consider the words: يٰٓاَهۡلَ يَثۡرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمۡ. Addressing the people of Madīnah by the words "O People of Yathrib" is a clear indication of the fact that their speakers were the Bedouins belonging to the suburbs of Madīnah. If they had been the inhabitants of Madīnah, there was no reason for them to address the brethren of their own city in this manner. Yathrib is the old name of Madīnah. After the Prophet's migration, it came to be called Madīnah al-nabī and later just Madīnah. However, the inhabitants of the villages, especially the enemies, continued to call it Yathrib. Since these people were both villagers and Hypocrites, they did not accept the new name. They would have reckoned that its occupancy by Islam and Muslim must be a temporary phase. The situation would revert back. By referring to this style of address adopted by them, the Qur'ān has actually lifted the veil from their inner-selves.

In order to cause frustration and discouragement in the ranks of the Muslims, these Hypocrites advised the Muslims in a very sincere tone to back off because they would not be able to fight the huge enemy army. A battle in such circumstances would prove fruitless. It would be better if they return to their homes. Their implication would be that in this situation, there is a possibility that their enemies treat them a little leniently but if a war ensues, then they have little chances.

Consider the next part of the verse: وَيَسۡتَاۡذِنُ فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمُ النَّبِىَّ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِنَّ بُيُوۡتَنَا عَوۡرَةٌ. The word عَوۡرَةٌ means "an insecure place." These words depict another group of these Bedouin Hypocrites. They presented this plea before the Prophet (sws) that since their houses are isolate and insecure, they should be granted permission to return to them. The first group tried to cause frustration among the Muslims and discouraged them in order to convince them to return from the battle front while this group tried to find an escape route so that the enemy easily achieves its aim. The words "our houses are insecure" uttered by these Hypocrites indicate that they belonged to the villages in the suburbs of Madīnah. Such an excuse could never have been uttered

by the residents of Madīnah. The details found in history regarding this battle show that prior arrangements had been made to protect women and children.

The words وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا state that this excuse has no basis. Their houses are not insecure and not prone to danger; these people only want to run away from the battle-front.

وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوْا بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٣﴾[13]

The antecedent of the pronoun in اَقْطَارِهَا can be يَثْرِبَ; however, it is evident from concomitant indications that it is بُيُوت (houses). In other words, the excuse of protecting the houses is merely an excuse; they actually want to run away from protecting and defending the cause of religion. The cheapest thing to them is religion. If the enemy attacks their houses and asks them to revert to their previous religion or fight the Muslims, they will accept these demands. I have discussed the word فِتْنَةٌ at various instances in this exegesis. Here it refers to the demand of reversion and apostasy or waging war against the Muslims. Zamakasharī[14] has adopted this view, and I think that it is correct. Verse 91 of Sūrah al-Nisā' points to this category of the Hypocrites in the following words: سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّاْمَنُوْكُمْ وَ يَاْمَنُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ۭ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ اُرْكِسُوْا (٤: ٩١) (you will soon find others who want to make peace with you and also with their own people. But whenever they are called to sedition they plunge into it headlong, (4:91)).

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ۭ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿١٥﴾[15]

The necessary requirement of accepting faith and pledging a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws) is that a person should not refrain from sacrificing his life and wealth and in fact becomes liable to sacrifice everything for the cause of God. However, these Hypocrites had given an additional pledge as well: most of them had

13. And if they had been attacked from their sides, then asked to give up faith they would have gladly accepted it and very few from them would have desisted from this.

14. See: al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāff*, vol. 3, 536.

15. Even though they had promised God that they would not turn their backs and promises made with God will be questioned.

not participated in previous battles because of baseless excuses, and had assured the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims that if ever the need arose to fight again they would do so with full fervour. These assurances have been mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of places. By referring to them, it is said that earlier on they had vehemently promised to fight if the need arose but when this need arose they have come forward with the excuse that their houses are insecure.

The words وَ كَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْئُوْلًا sound a threat to them that they should remember that they will be held accountable for every promise made with God. A person is, in fact, accountable for every wrongdoing; however, the obligation towards a promise made with God is much more. Thus, in Sūrah al-Ṣaff, the words used are: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ (٦١: ٢-٣) (Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do, (61:2-3)).

قُلْ لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَاِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٦﴾[16]

The verse implies that evading one's obligation for fear of death or execution is not a wise policy at all. It is in fact a very foolish thing to do. Life and death are entirely in the hands of God. If a person shirks a duty imposed on him by God because of such fears, then this, in other words, means that he wants to run away from God. Obviously, there is no possibility of this. If a person in his estimation can escape God like this, then till when can he remain a renegade? One day, he will die and will have to face the God He wanted to escape from. If the words وَ اِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا of this verse are deliberated upon, they mean that the life of such escapers is totally stripped of blessings. Whatever little time they spend here, is devoid of them. The fact is that had they not adopted this policy of escapism, they would still have completed their term of life and earned an eternal kingdom in lieu of a few days of this life.

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ

16. Tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will be of no avail to you. You have very little time to enjoy about."

وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٧﴾[17]

In accordance with the linguistic principles of Arabic, a part of a sentence is suppressed before اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً. If this suppression is revealed, the whole discourse would something to the effect: اَرَادَ بِكُمْ اَوْ يُمْسِكُ رَحْمَتَهُ اِنْ رَحْمَةً (or restrain His mercy if He intends to do mercy). There are many examples of such suppression in Arabic. The expression متقدما سيفا أو رمحا is an example of this as well. I have referred to the subtle examples of this style found in the Qur'ān at various places. This style is not found in Urdu. Hence, I have revealed this suppression.

The expression مِّنْ دُوْنِ also means "against" or "in opposition to." I have explained this fact at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The verse means that if a person wants to evade God, he should state who will save him if God wants to harm him. Similarly, in spite of the wishes of a person's enemies, if God wants to be merciful to him, who has the power to stop this? Mercy and harm, both are in the hands of God. So what is the reason for this evasion and escapism?

Since the context occasions a warning, the words وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا specially point to the fact that if God decides to seize them, they should remember that no protector will be able to protect them and no helper will be able to help them. A person can be helped through intercession as was the belief of the Idolaters with regard to their deities and through support and power as well, as is the case of every person of power. Here both of these are refuted.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَآئِلِيْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٨﴾[18]

An incomplete verb is suppressed before يَعْلَمُ. I have explained this style at a number of places. There is a very severe threat concealed in this. It is said that God has continued to know people among you who stopped their brothers from war and asked these brothers to come to them and these people participated very sparingly in wars.

---

17. Ask them: "Who can save you from God if He wants to harm you or can prevent Him from showing you mercy?" And they will not find for themselves any protector nor helper other than God.

18. God well knows those among you who hold back others and who say to their brothers: "Join us," and seldom have they been taking part in war.

The implication is that these people think that no one is aware of their conspiracies. Yet God has always remained informed of them and when this is so, he will not leave them without punishment.

In my opinion, this is a reference to the Hypocrites who not only did not take part in defence but at the same time would stop others who trusted them and would say to them to come to them so that no one can hold them accountable. It needs to be kept in mind that the defence line in the Battle of the Ditch was very long, and hence the Hypocrites had many opportunities to evade their duty. They themselves would evade war and would also try their other brethren to become their associates in this.

Before the indefinite verb يَأْتُوْنَ too, an incomplete verb is suppressed, and the word الْبَأْسَ means "defence." In other words, these people would sparingly take part in the defence of the city and would do so only to show off, and would try to demoralize those who would take part and would call these people to their barracks to make them their associates.

اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾[19]

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ is connected with the previous sentence: وَلَا يَأْتُوْنَ الْبَأْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا. In other words, they would not take part in the defence in the first place, and if they would do so, they would be very stingy in sacrificing their wealth and persons for the Muslims. They desired to become martyrs and *ghāzīs* without spilling a single drop of blood.

The words فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ imply that these people participate in a battle not because they want to make some sacrifice but because they want to register themselves as warriors without risking themselves. Hence, when a dangerous situation would arise on the battle front their eyes would circulate

19. They avoid you. Yet when danger befalls them you would see that they look at you with eyes as the eyes of a person that roll around in fear of death. Then when danger goes away, they talk to you with sharp tongues in greed of wealth. These people did not profess faith; so, the Almighty made their deeds go waste. And this is very easy for God.

here and there as if they are about to die. Only that person can stare death in the face who has the intention to be martyred in the way of God. Even a small danger is enough to expose people who only take part in a battle as a pretentious display.

The word سلق means to talk in a sweet and flattering tone. Hence خطیب سلاق means a orator who has a very sharp tongue.

The words فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ imply that when some danger arises, they become so worried stiff as if they will pass away with anxiety; however, when this danger passes away, they talk in a sweet and flattering way as if it was their valour and courage which stopped the enemy from advancing. Other wise danger was lurking very near.

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ means that their tongues would become sharp in greed for wealth so that they could gather the maximum amount when the spoils of war would be distributed.

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ occurs in parallel to اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ at the beginning of the verse. The word اَشِحَّةً is the plural of شحیح. It means both "a stingy person" and "a greedy person." Both these meanings are two aspects of the same personality. In the first part it occurs in the first meaning and in the second part in the second. In other words, such is the nature of their miserliness in the matter of the Muslims that they are not willing to spill even a single drop of blood nor spend a single penny; however, in the matter of spoils of war, they will start blaming everyone out of their greediness.

The words سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ point not only to their sweet talk but also to the bite found in their tongues. The reason is that since the Hypocrites would take part in a battle only to gather the spoils of war, they would even go as far as to blame, censure and curse others to obtain these spoils. So much so, at times they would even blame the Prophet (sws) in showing bias in the distribution of the spoils of war, as has been mentioned earlier in Sūrah al-Nisā', Surah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah. They would sarcastically say that it is they who have won the war for the rest while others are given more share than them and they are ignored.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا imply that these people lay claim to faith merely through their tongues; they do not actually profess faith. For this very reason, the Almighty has laid

waste their deeds which they apparently did for religion. They will not get any reward for them in the Hereafter. God accepts only those deeds which are done while professing faith.

The words وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا are meant to dispel some many grave misconceptions of people. Many people do not give any importance to intention. If a certain deed of a person is liked by them, they think that in the Hereafter too he will be richly rewarded for it. This, in fact, is against reality. The greatest of deeds has no weight in the eyes of God if it is not done to please Him. He is not in need of any deed. The doers of a deed themselves are in need of it. They alone receive its benefit. It is the law of God that He accepts every deed, whether small or big, which is done in accordance with His directives and purely to please Him. He will totally reject a deed that is done to someone other than Him and will ask its doers to demand its reward from those for whom they did it. This is the case even if this deed is as great as *ḥajj* and *jihād*. It is said that no one should remain in the misconception that it will be difficult for God to do such a thing. On the contrary, it is something very easy for Him. He is not in need of any deed and therefore He is not required to gather all types of deeds and regard them to be useful.

Some people are misled to believe that since God is very merciful and gracious, every righteous deed done in any manner will be accepted by Him. No doubt, God is very merciful and gracious; however, at the same time, He is also has a great sense of honour and is self-sufficient. Hence it is not difficult at all for Him to reject deeds whose acceptance is against His honour. Details of the misconceptions of the Jews regarding the attribute of graciousness of God have been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِي الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۲۰﴾[20]

The cowardice of these Hypocrites has already been alluded to

20. These people are thinking that the groups of the enemy have not left as yet, and if the groups come again they would desire to be in the villages with the Bedouins and keep asking about your news from there. And had they been with you, even then they would have seldom taken part in the battle.

earlier. This verse sheds further light on this attitude of theirs: it should not be thought that the departing of enemy groups has allayed their fears. These groups have reached their homes after facing defeat; however, the hearts of these Hypocrites are struck with such awe and terror that they think that the enemy groups are still stationed there.

The words وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِي الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ imply that now they have somehow unwillingly stayed in Madīnah. However, if the possibility of a second attack arises, they would desire to go and live with the Bedouins in their villages instead of remaining in Madīnah, and keep track of what is happening with the Muslims right from there.

The words وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا assure the Muslims that if they adopt this strategy, it will not harm them. Even if they remain with them, they are not those who will participate in a battle. It is better if they remain away so that others are not influenced by their evil touch. Readers are advised to look up what has been written under the explanation of verse 18 earlier.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ [21]

This verse puts the cowards to shame. They are told that present among them at the battle front was God's Messenger and they observed through their very eyes how he faced all the dangers. So why did they not follow His exemplary behaviour? Why did they remain such cowards?

The words لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا imply that not everyone who claims to be a follower of the Messenger is actually able to follow his exemplary character. Only those people can face the trial of this path who hope to meet God and await the Day of Judgement and who constantly refresh themselves through God's remembrance.

It is evident from this verse that only those people are steadfast and resolute in the path of truth who have a strong faith in God and in the Hereafter and who keep this faith refreshed through God's

21. Indeed, the life of God's Messenger has the best example for you. For those who hope to meet God and hope for the Hereafter and remember God in abundance.

remembrance. Moreover, also evident from this is that the Hypocrites neither have faith in God and in the Hereafter nor keep God in their remembrance. Hence, even after the enemy had been routed, the fear of the enemy did not go away from their hearts.

وَلَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۫ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اِيْمَانًا وَّتَسْلِيْمًا ﴿۲۲﴾[22]

In verse 12 earlier, the statement of the Hypocrites and the jealous has been cited: seeing the vast expanse of the enemy army they began to spread the propaganda among the Muslims that the promises made with them by God and His Messenger are proving false. This verse cites the impression of the true Muslims. When they saw the hold of their enemy, they assured their compatriots that this is the same test of which they were already pre-informed by God and His messengers. This is a reference to those verses of the Qur'ān in which Muslims had been forewarned that they would have to pass through many enduring trials before they reach their destined success. Thus the words in Sūrah al-Baqarah are:

اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَاْتِكُمْ مَّثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ؕ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَاْسَآءُ وَالضَّرَّآءُ وَزُلْزِلُوْا حَتّٰى يَقُوْلَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ مَتٰى نَصْرُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ نَصْرَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ (٢: ٢١٤)

Do you think that you would go to Paradise even though you have not encountered the circumstances which were encountered by people before you? Afflictions of hunger and sickness befell them; and so shaken were they that the messenger and the companions who were with him all cried out: "When shall the help of God turn up?" Listen up! God's help is near. (2:214)

In Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, this established practice is referred to by the words:

22. And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience.

اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ (٢٩: ٢-٣)

Do people think that they will be allowed to go merely after saying: "We have professed faith," and they will not be tested. And We have indeed tested those before them. Thus God will definitely make distinct those who are truthful in their claim to faith from those who are liars. (29: 2-3)

The words وَ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ imply that the promise of God and His Messenger was not a false one; on the contrary, it proved to be true. People who remain steadfast in this phase will see the truthfulness of the future promises as well that Muslims will become the masters of the treasures of Rome and Persia.

The words وَ مَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّآ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا imply that this test did not weaken them; in fact, it only augmented their faith and obedience. It needs to be kept in mind that the trials people face for the cause of truth highlight the truthfulness of the truthful just as they bring to the fore the weakness of the weak. This is an established practice of God.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾[23]

It has been mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah *al-A'rāf* that when the word رِجَالٌ is used in this way without being defined, it serves to magnify the noun. Hence, if it is translated as the "righteous people" or "commendable people", then this translation would be in line with the essence of the word.

The word نَحْب has a broad connotation. Thus, determination, resoluteness, promises, vows are included in it. Imām al-Bukhārī[24] says that it means عهد (promise) and this explanation of his is in line with the essence of the word as well as what is occasioned by the context.

---

23. There are the courageous among the believers who have fulfilled their promise with God. So, some among them have fulfilled their promise and some await to do so, and have not the slightest changed [the promise].

24. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*, vol. 3, 476.

Earlier, in verse 15, it has been stated that the Hypocrites had promised God and His Messenger that they will not turn their backs if ever the chance of any battle arises; yet when the time came, they began finding excuses to run away. Here, in this verse, God has mentioned His faithful people: there are those also among the ranks of the Muslims who sacrificed their lives in order to fulfill the promise they had made with God and those who have not yet fulfilled this promise they are prepared to sacrifice their lives if needed and thereby fulfill their responsibility. The words وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا state that they did not change the slightest the promise they made with God.

لِّيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۲۴﴾ [25]

It is evident from the context and occasion that a verb is suppressed here. In other words, God stirred this battle of the ditch so that it can become a yardstick to judge the righteous from the Hypocrites. Once this judgement is made, God will reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants and accept their repentance if they repent.

According to a well-known style of the Qur'ān, examples of which can be seen in this *tafsīr*, the words اِنْ شَآءَ are suppressed after يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ to do away with needless repetition. The will of God is subservient to His wisdom and established practice. Hence, it means that if they repent, they will find God merciful and forgiving: if He intends, He will forgive them. The words of this verse invite the Hypocrites to repent and tell them that there is still a chance for this. If they want, they can once again become worthy of God's mercy by asking for forgiveness from Him. At the same time, they are reminded that all matters rest on the will of God. Hence, instead of depending on false supports, they should consign themselves to God. Those who have interpreted the words اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ to mean that whomsoever God wills to forgive, He will forgive without their repentance have failed to understand the established practice of God

25. So that God may reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants or accept their repentance [if they repent]. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

regarding repentance. No doubt, no one can stop or change His intention, yet His intention is always subservient to the laws which are governed by His own wisdom and justice.

وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ۭ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا ﴿٢٥﴾[26]

The words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا refer to the groups among the allies who had attacked. The verse states that these people had come filled with anger, venom and malice to rout the Muslims; yet God routed them with this anger; they could not vent any part of it. The words لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا imply that they had great plans but none of them materialized even slightly.

The words وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ refer to the fact that Muslims were not left to themselves to defend this dangerous attack of the enemies; God sufficed on their behalf to fight for them. He inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy through tempestuous winds and a powerful army of angels. They were totally humbled and humiliated.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا serve as a reminder to the words وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا found in the opening verses of the *sūrah*. God is powerful and dominant; hence, His servants should fully trust Him. If they pursue His cause by trusting Him, He will not leave them helpless. He will send the elements of nature and His angels to help them.

وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا تَقْتُلُوْنَ وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَــُٔوْهَا ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾[27]

These verses refer to the Qurayẓah tribe. It has been mentioned earlier that they had struck a treaty of peace with the Muslims. However, when the enemy allies in the Battle of the Ditch attacked Madīnah to rout the Muslims once and for all, they broke this treaty

---

26. And the Almighty routed the angry disbelievers, not letting them achieve their aims. And God became sufficient for the Muslims regarding war and God is Powerful and Dominant.

27. And God brought down from their forts these People of the Book who helped the disbelievers and struck awe in their hearts. Some of them you slay and some you imprison. And made you the inheritors of their land, their houses and their wealth. And there is more land as well which you have not yet set foot upon. And God has power over all things.

and sided with the attackers. It is evident from history that Ḥuyy ibn Akhṭab, a famous Jewish leader met Ka‘b ibn Asad who was the leader of the Qurayẓah tribe and enticed him to side with the attackers. Initially, Ka‘b showed some hesitation because of the treaty but later succumbed to the propaganda of Ḥuyy who said that it was for them that he had gathered all Arabia and made them attack Madīnah; now if they do not side with these attackers, then of what use was all these efforts of his. Ḥuyy further told him that this was their best chance to eliminate the Muslims and if they lose this chance, they may regret it; however, at that time regretting will be of no use. These words of Ḥuyy were enough to cast a spell, and the Banū Qurayẓah broke their treaty and became allies of the attackers. This thing was a further cause of worry for the Muslims. They had their forts and barracks very near Madīnah and they had a large number of fighters with them. Their participation boosted the morale of the enemy many times, and this became a very enduring trial for the Muslims. However, just as all the enemy tribes were humbled by God’s help, the Banū Qurayẓah too were routed.

It is evident from history that right after returning from the battlefront, the Almighty directed the Prophet (sws) to attack the Banū Qurayẓah. So, the Prophet (sws) immediately asked the Muslims to launch an attack on them. Muslims laid siege around them and this lasted almost twenty five days. Finally, being awe-struck, they accepted Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh (rta) as an arbitrator and expressed their willingness to abide by his verdict. Sa‘d (rta) passed the verdict that all men capable of fighting a battle should be executed and women and children be made slaves. This verdict was implemented forthwith. The verse under discussion refers to this very incident.

The word صيصة refers to the claw of a cock. Its plural صياصى also connotes the horns of an ox. From here it evolved to mean citadels, forts and garrisons. Initially, the Banū Qurayzah shut themselves in their forts but later getting frustrated at the siege were compelled to come out and give themselves up to the Muslims.

The words وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ imply that God implanted the awe and fear of the Muslims in their hearts in such a manner that they could not even dare resist Sa‘d’s verdict in the slightest way. Muslims killed all their men who could participate in a battle without any

resistance from them and enslaved the rest. The Almighty consigned their whole territory including their houses, forts and all other assets to the Muslims, as implied by the words: وَاَوۡرَثَكُمۡ اَرۡضَهُمۡ وَدِيَارَهُمۡ وَاَمۡوَالَهُمۡ.

The words وَ اَرۡضًا لَّمۡ تَطَـُٔوۡهَا give glad tidings of future victories. Thus besides the immediate gains, they will be given more territories in their possession – territories they have yet to set foot on. God has destined to hand them over to them. This is a reference to the conquests of Khaybar, Makkah, Rome, Syria and other places.

The words وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرًا imply that what the Muslims saw with their eyes was enough to give them this satisfaction that God has power over all things. No one can stop Him from fulfilling His intentions. Hence, believers should fully trust Him.

Section III: Verses (28-35)

In the previous section, Muslims were asked to unite in showing obedience to God and His Prophet (sws). Now in this section the wives of the Prophet (sws) are addressed and asked to remain on guard in the wake of the mischief being spread by Hypocrite men and women. They want to create the ailment of materialism in the hearts of his wives. The fact is that God has chosen them for the companionship of His Messenger so that they can become a means of delivering the divine laws and wisdom which they are acquiring from him. If they discharge their duties imposed on them with regard to their status as his wives, God will grant them great recompense. On similar grounds, their punishment is also very severe if they commit some wrong. Readers may now proceed to study these verses with this background in mind.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ قُلۡ لِّاَزۡوَاجِكَ اِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا وَزِيۡنَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيۡنَ اُمَتِّعۡكُنَّ وَاُسَرِّحۡكُنَّ
سَرَاحًا جَمِيۡلًا ﴿۲۸﴾ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ وَالدَّارَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡمُحۡسِنٰتِ مِنۡكُنَّ اَجۡرًا
عَظِيۡمًا ﴿۲۹﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِىِّ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِ مِنۡكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفۡ لَهَا الۡعَذَابُ ضِعۡفَيۡنِ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ﴿۳۰﴾ وَمَنۡ يَّقۡنُتۡ مِنۡكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَتَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا نُّؤۡتِهَاۤ اَجۡرَهَا مَرَّتَيۡنِ ۙ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لَهَا
رِزۡقًا كَرِيۡمًا ﴿۳۱﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِىِّ لَسۡتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيۡتُنَّ فَلَا تَخۡضَعۡنَ بِالۡقَوۡلِ فَيَطۡمَعَ الَّذِىۡ فِىۡ

قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿۳۲﴾ وَ قَرْنَ فِیْ بُیُوْتِكُنَّ وَ لَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِیَّةِ الْاُوْلٰی وَ اَقِمْنَ
الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِیْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا یُرِیْدُ اللّٰهُ لِیُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَیْتِ وَ
یُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِیْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ اذْكُرْنَ مَا یُتْلٰی فِیْ بُیُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِیْفًا خَبِیْرًا
﴿۳۴﴾ اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِیْنَ وَ الْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَ الْقٰنِتِیْنَ وَ الْقٰنِتٰتِ وَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ وَ الصّٰدِقٰتِ وَ
الصّٰبِرِیْنَ وَ الصّٰبِرٰتِ وَ الْخٰشِعِیْنَ وَ الْخٰشِعٰتِ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقِیْنَ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَ الصَّآىِٕمِیْنَ وَ الصّٰٓىِٕمٰتِ وَ
الْحٰفِظِیْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَ الْحٰفِظٰتِ وَ الذّٰكِرِیْنَ اللّٰهَ كَثِیْرًا وَّ الذّٰكِرٰتِ ۙ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّ اَجْرًا عَظِیْمًا ﴿۳۵﴾

Prophet! Tell your wives: "If you seek the life of this world and all its finery, come, I will grant them to you and release you honourably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, rest assured that God has prepared a rich recompense for those who continue with grace." (28-29)

Wives of the Prophet! Those of you who commit a blatant lewd act shall be doubly punished. And this is easy enough for God. And those of you who obey God and His Messenger and do righteous deeds, We shall doubly reward them. And We have prepared for them an honourable provision. (30-31)

Wives of the Prophet! You are not like common women, if you fear God. So, be not soft in your speech, lest those who have an ailment in their hearts are led into some futile desire and speak in simple terms. (32)

And stick to your homes and do not adopt the ways of the past *jāhiliyyah*. And adhere to the prayer, keep paying *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the Prophet's House! God seeks only to eradicate filth from you and to fully purify you. And communicate the revelations of God and His wisdom that are recited in your dwellings. Indeed, God is Very Discerning and All-Knowing.

Obedient men and obedient women, believing men and believing women, dutiful men and dutiful women, righteous men and righteous women, steadfast men and steadfast women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, chaste men and chaste women, men and women who remember God in abundance– for them, God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward. (35)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ اِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَ زِيْنَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ اُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَ اُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿۲۸﴾ وَاِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنٰتِ مِنْكُنَّ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾[28]

Our exegetes while delineating the background of this verse say that when after the conquest of Khaybar, Muslims became affluent, the wives of the Prophet (sws) also demanded from him that they be provided the luxuries and comforts of life. This verse actually reprimands them on this demand. In my opinion, this inference is incorrect on a number of counts:

It is evident from the context and occasion of this verse that the events which are being discussed here belong to the fourth or fifth year after migration. The Battle of the Ditch and the battle with the Banū Qurayẓah, and the marriage between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) discussed in subsequent verses all belong to 5 AH. Khaybar was yet to be conquered. Earlier in verse 27 the words وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا in the opinion of our exegetes already refer to the glad tidings.

Secondly, if the demand was to merely increase their maintenance allowance, then this is nothing worth rebuking them in such a manner as to making them part from the Prophet (sws) after giving them some provisions of life. Such a demand does not entail any admonition in the first place and in the second, if anything could most be done, then it was counseling them. They could have been told that if they want to remain with the Prophet (sws), then they must adopt the life of patience and simplicity.

Thirdly, this evil estimation about them cannot be made that at some time they became so overcome with the desire to lead a leisurely and luxurious life that they started to make demands for it, and the situation got so worse that God had to interfere in it and He had to take notice of it to the extent mentioned in these verses.

---

28. Prophet! Tell your wives: "If you seek the life of this world and all its finery, come, I will grant them to you and release you honourably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, rest assured that God has prepared a rich recompense for those who continue with grace."

So, this occasion of revelation is not acceptable to us. Neither do the words of the verse accept it nor the time in which this verse was revealed. Here, I will allude to certain circumstances of those times in the light of this *sūrah* which will help us in determining the true occasion and context of these verses.

Reflection on all the contents of this *sūrah* show that at that time just as the conspiracies and connivances of the Hypocrites to disillusion common Muslims from Islam and the Prophet (sws) had increased, similarly, the women among the Hypocrites had launched a very dangerous campaign to disrupt the comfort of the family life of the Prophet (sws). These women would go to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (sws) and would tell them in very sympathetic terms that they belong to noble and decent families yet their life is without any comfort and ease and that they are living like prisoners; if they had been married to someone else, they would have lived in a luxurious and imperial way in great comfort. At the same time, these Hypocrite women would also tell the wives of the Prophet (sws) that if they get divorced from him, there were many big leaders who were ready to marry them and their lives would then became enviable for others. It will become evident in subsequent verses that whenever the Hypocrites would get a chance to go to the houses of the Prophet (sws) and talk to his noble wives, they, while seizing this opportunity, would necessarily try to give some evil suggestions to them. The real purpose would be to create some mischief and disrupt his family life the way they had done so in the case of ‘Ā’ishah (rta), the details of which are discussed in Sūrah al-Nūr. The least benefit they reckoned that they would get was to create discomfort in the lives of his noble wives and perhaps even get a chance to fulfill their despicable desire of marrying them.

Though the noble wives of the Prophet (sws) were not unaware of these designs of the Hypocrites and had even gone through some bad experiences in this regard yet it is the way of decent, gracious and modest people that if a person talks to them with sympathy and kindness, they gently reply to them even though they may know the ill-intention behind it. The noble wives too because of their graciousness would softly reply to these people. This would create false hope in these mean people that their propaganda is succeeding and soon they will succeed in their objective.

It is in these circumstances that these verses were revealed. Their real addressees are these hypocrite men and women are meant to expose their conspiracies and connivances; however, since their mean intent was hidden, the Qur'ān, instead of addressing them, addressed the Prophet (sws) and his noble wives.

Here this eloquent style should be kept in mind that at times a speech is apparently directed to a group yet the admonition concealed in it is actually directed to someone else.

Readers should now reflect on this verse in this background. After addressing the Prophet (sws), he is told that he should communicate to his wives that if they want the comforts and luxuries of this world, then he will amicably part with them after giving them the provisions of life, and if they want to seek God and His Messenger and the success of the Hereafter, then they should bear in mind that God has prepared a great reward for those among them who will befittingly fulfill the rights of God and His Messenger.

It is evident from history that the Prophet (sws) offered this permission of liberation to his wives, and it was before his most beloved wife 'Ā'ishah (rta) to whom he made this offer the foremost. He directed her to not immediately reply to him and deliberate on this offer and also discuss it with her parents before any response. However, 'Ā'ishah (rta) replied forthwith that she does not need to consult anyone in this matter and that her choice is to live with the Prophet (sws). The Hypocrites must have tried to inveigle her the utmost. When this answer from her created despair in them, one can judge the case of the other wives as well.

In this manner, the Qur'ān once and for all put an end to the conspiracies and connivances of the Hypocrites against the noble wives on the one hand, and, on the other, through this test also made evident this reality that all the noble wives without any exception had chosen God, His Messenger and the Hereafter as their real aim in life. It was this ideology that had associated them to God's Messenger and so strong was this association that no greed or want could supersede it.

The summary of all this discussion is that these verses do not rebuke the noble wives for demanding the luxuries of this world, as is generally understood. Actually, by providing them the freedom of choice, the purpose is to demonstrate their lofty character so that the

hopes of the Hypocrites are permanently dashed to the ground. They had reckoned that by luring the noble wives into asking for the luxuries of this world, they would incline them to their own selves. After this declaration of providing them with freedom each person was given the opportunity to proceed in whatever direction he or she deemed fit. It, however, became clear that the noble wives were chosen by God Himself and no one can break into this sacred area.

Consider the verse: وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ وَ الدَّارَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡمُحۡسِنٰتِ مِنۡكُنَّ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا (۲۹). The word احسان here means to fulfill the rights of God and His Messenger as well as the responsibilities of the Hereafter in a sincere and befitting manner. Some part of the discourse is suppressed in the verse. This is indicated by the style of the verse itself. If this suppression is unfolded, the overall discourse would be to the effect: Wives of the Prophet! If you seek God and His Messenger and success of the Hereafter, then befittingly and fervently obey God and His Messenger and the responsibilities of the Hereafter. Rest assured that God has prepared a great reward for those among you who fulfill these rights and obligations with احسان. It also becomes indirectly evident from this verse that even for the noble wives mere association with the Prophet (sws) will not be of any benefit to them: the real thing is deeds and obedience to God and that too with احسان.

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِ مِنۡكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفۡ لَهَا الۡعَذَابُ ضِعۡفَيۡنِ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ﴿۳۰﴾[29]

The previous statement was given through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) because only this was appropriate. Now from this verse, the noble wives are addressed directly by the Almighty and told that He has granted them a high status and position because they are the wives of the Prophet (sws), and as a result they have heavy responsibilities as well. In this regard, they are first told that if they commit some wrong, they will not be judged the way other common Muslims will be judged. They will be evaluated through another standard and their punishment will be twice that of the common

29. Wives of the Prophet! Those of you who commit a blatant lewd act shall be doubly punished. And this is easy enough for God.

Muslims.

The words وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا express the fact that they must not remain in the misconception that since they are the wives of the Prophet (sws), punishing them would weigh heavily for God. The law of God is equal for all and He will not show any lenience on the basis of any association with anyone.

This admonition does not necessarily entail that, God, forbid, there was a chance that the noble wives would indulge in wrongdoing. It is merely a reminder of their status and position and so that they are fully prepared to ward off any evil suggestions from Satan. The words فَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ (open lewdness) used here are used in consideration of the hidden designs of the Hypocrites. Day and night, they were actively involved in creating a scandal with regard to the noble wives to satisfy their evil designs and to damage the repute of the Muslims. By using this expression, the Qur'ān has in fact informed the noble wives that the Hypocrites are plotting devilish schemes in the garb of sympathy and concern.

وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ۙ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

The verse states that just as any wrongdoing from the noble wives entails double punishment, their pious deeds will earn them a double reward. For this reason, those of them who continue to show sincere obedience to the Prophet (sws) and do righteous deeds will be rewarded doubly by the Almighty Who has prepared for them an honourable provision (رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا). I have explained at another instance that رِزْق signifies God's grace and gifts and the attribute كَرِيْم signifies the fact that this provision of God will not be given to them in charity but as a right and will be given to them forever without any condition or accountability.

It becomes evident from this verse that the accountability before God will relate to the conclusive accountability of the truth and the reward of deeds will be commensurate to the conditions they are done in.

---

30. And those of you who obey God and His Messenger and do righteous deeds, We shall doubly reward them. And We have prepared for them an honourable provision.

Since the noble wives were fortunate enough to live in the company of the Prophet (sws), and a Messenger is the greatest means of conclusive communication of the truth, they will have to face a stern accountability. Similarly, since the sincere companionship of a messenger is a difficult task, their reward too shall be double. This has always remained an established law and practice of God in cases of sins and their accountability and it is entirely based on justice.

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِيْ فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

خضوع means "to express humility" and the expression فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ would mean "do not speak softly and humbly." In normal circumstances, speaking in this manner is what is recommended; however, in certain situations a different attitude is needed. I have already indicated earlier that in those times, Hypocrite men and women day and night fervently wanted to inveigle the noble wives through their evil suggestions and create some scandal in their lives. Since they would always make these suggestions in a very sympathetic manner, the noble mothers of the believers too would respond in a soft manner. This would make these mischief mongers take liberty and they would reckon that they would soon succeed in their conspiracies. It is in these special circumstances that the mothers of the believers were directed to change their attitude. They were told that they were not like ordinary Muslim women; because of their relationship with the Prophet (sws), their good and bad deeds have a special status; their good deeds will became an example for others and any blemish on their part will give the wicked-minded people an opportunity in their own favour; hence they must be very cautious and careful; if the Hypocrites try to implant evil suggestions in their hearts, they should not respond softly to them because of their graciousness for this would create some wrong hope in people who have malice and jealousy in their hearts against God and His Prophet (sws); on the contrary, they should speak in plain and simple

31. Wives of the Prophet! You are not like common women, if you fear God. So be not soft in your speech, lest those who have an ailment in their hearts are led into some futile desire and speak in simple terms.

terms so that those having ill-intent fully realize that their plans are not going to succeed.

The words لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ refer to the status of the noble wives which they had in relation to all other women of the world because of their association with the Prophet (sws). Obviously, after this, every word and deed that emanated from them was regarded as an example for common Muslims, and God regarded them to be the mothers of the believers in their status. It becomes evident from the words اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ that this status of theirs is conditional to piety. If they adhere to piety, they will continue to enjoy this distinct status and if they do not fulfill this condition, then as has been discussed earlier, their accountability will be twice that of the others.

The word مَرَضٌ in فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ refers to malice and jealousy which the miscreant Hypocrites harboured in their hearts for the Prophet (sws). It was because of this ailment that they would persistently strive to malign the noble wives. It was their leader who had plotted the mischief of the *ifk* incident.

The words قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا in وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا imply that if there arises a need to talk to such people, then they should be spoken to in plain and simple terms the way a person speaks to a stranger in which there is no trace of any sort of inclination. In other words, the noble wives should not speak softly with these Hypocrites in deference to their sympathetic tone; they are mean people and want to exploit the civilized behaviour of the noble wives.

وَ قَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ وَ لَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْاُوْلٰى وَ اَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾[32]

This verse provides further guidance to what is being discussed. It asks the noble wives to adopt certain measures that will protect them from the evil designs of Hypocrite men and women, and directs them to certain tasks that behoove their status to accomplish which the Almighty had selected them. In order to understand these directives,

32. And stick to your homes and do not adopt the ways of the past *jāhiliyyah*. And adhere to the prayer, keep paying *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the Prophet's House! God seeks only to eradicate filth from you and to fully purify you.

readers may refresh in their minds what has been said earlier: Hypocrite women were trying to engender and implant the same desires in the hearts of the noble wives as they themselves harboured. For example, they would say that if the noble wives liberate themselves from the Prophet (sws), prominent chiefs of their times would marry them, and they would be able to go out for shopping and leisure-walks after adorning themselves with finery the way wives of affluent people do. The Qur'ān by tacitly referring to these evil suggestions of Hypocrite women advised the noble wives to not go while displaying their adornments the way women would in the time of *jāhiliyyah* used to. This directive is very similar to what a pious father gives to his obedient children when he comes to know that some evil elements are suggesting evil ways to them and trying to lead them astray. If, at that time, a father tells his upright son to fully focus on his education and not adopt the ways of rogues and ruffians, then this does not mean at all that his son has actually adopted their ways or there is a chance that he might do so. In fact, it is a sarcastic remark on these ruffians and is meant to protect people of their ill-ways. Precisely the same directive has been given to the noble wives. The directive is a sarcastic remark on the ways adopted by women of those times and is meant to despise them. However, this remark is not directly addressed to them; it is rather addressed to the noble wives. Otherwise who among these wives could be expected to have this desire to move about outside of their houses or to display their fineries the way women of the *jāhiliyyah* period would do.

Our exegetes think that the attribute الْأُوْلٰى that qualifies الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ refers to the *jāhiliyyah* period of the times of the Prophets Noah (sws) and Idrīs (sws). However, this is a needless effort. In my opinion, this is a very subtle reference to the end of the *jāhiliyyah* culture which the Hypocrite men and women cherished and still hoped that it would survive in spite of the onslaught Islam launched against it. The Qur'ān in order to make them lose all their hopes has called it الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُوْلٰى implying that it is a tale of the past; its era is over. Those who think that it will once again be revived are living in a fool's paradise. Islam and Islamic culture have weakened its roots and if some of its signs remain, they will soon be wiped out. Those who are guarding it are guarding something bygone. If they do not change their attitude,

the day its remaining edifice falls, it will also bury them underneath it.

The words وَ اَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ refer to the fact that what needs to be done is not what the women of the times of the *jāhiliyyah* period do; what needs to be done is to show diligence in adhering to the prayer and in paying *zakāh* and showing sincere obedience to God and His Messenger. These three things are mentioned here as comprehensive directives of religion. The implication is that they should spread this radiance of divine guidance in their circle of activity: their houses – the radiance which the Prophet (sws) and his companions are spreading outside.

The words اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا specially and affectionately address the wives of the Prophet (sws) and assure them that these directives which are being given to them are not meant to put restrictions in their lives. God in fact wants to remove all filth from them and train and educate them in a lofty way so that they can become worthy of the companionship of the Prophet (sws) both in this world and in the Hereafter. The word الرِّجْسَ (filth) is a sarcastic remark on the ornaments and embellishments of the women of high society of those times: these things are not adornments; they are in fact filth which they are wearing. God wants to cleanse the noble wives from this filth.

The real guidance provided by this verse has been discussed earlier; however, there are some more aspects in it which are worthy of consideration.

Firstly, the real circle of activity of a woman is the house. She should try to confine all her activities in it and if there ever arises the need to go out from her house, then she must abide by the bounds stated later in this *sūrah*.

Secondly, if women go out of their house while embellishing themselves, then this is not a sign of advancement of a society; it is rather a relegation to the period of the "first" *jāhiliyyah*.

Thirdly, it is the noble wives who primarily occupy the status of the household (*ahl al-bayt*) of the Prophet (sws). This verse is an explicit evidence to this usage. Other parallels of this also exist in the Qur'ān. No possibility exists of regarding anyone except the noble wives as the household of the Prophet (sws). If anyone else is to be included in this connotation, then it has to be in a secondary way and

not in a primary one.

وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِيْفًا خَبِيْرًا ۝۳۴ [33]

The verse spells out to the noble wives their real objective in life. God has not chosen them for what the Hypocrite women are inviting them to; their real responsibility is to communicate the verses of the Qur'ān and the wisdom they are being taught in their houses. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the just as Muḥammad (sws) is a prophet to men, he is also a prophet to women. Just as he would teach outside his home, he would also teach within the confines of his home. Just as revelations would be sent to him while he was in his house, they were also sent to him while he was outside it. Moreover, just as every word of his would be a source of guidance for people, in a similar way, every deed of his too would be a source of guidance for people. His life was not bifurcated into "private" and "public" categories; on the contrary, every moment of his life was devoted for the instruction and education of the *ummah*. For this, just as it was essential that his brave companions remain with him like a shadow in his outside life in order to preserve all his deeds, it was similarly essential that every moment of his life inside his home be preserved. This was obviously only possible through his wives. Thus, it is known that the extent of the words and deeds of the Prophet (sws) spread through them is no less than what was spread by other companions. And it is also evident from this verse that it was the Almighty Who Himself directed the noble wives to adopt this mission. Their purpose was not to gather the pebbles of this world but to distribute the pearls of knowledge and wisdom among people which were being rained down upon them. In this writer's opinion, this is one of the reasons why the Prophet (sws) was allowed to marry more wives. More will come on this later.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِيْفًا خَبِيْرًا assure the noble wives that if their duty is confined within their homes, all their services are in the knowledge of God. He has the knowledge of the minutest of things and is fully aware of them. He is well informed of all their needs and deeds.

33. And communicate the revelations of God and His wisdom that are recited in your dwellings. Indeed, God is Very Discerning and All-Knowing.

They should fulfill their obligation by trusting Him. He Himself is sufficient to look after their needs.

اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ وَالصّٰدِقِيْنَ وَالصّٰدِقٰتِ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰبِرٰتِ وَالْخٰشِعِيْنَ وَالْخٰشِعٰتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَالصَّآئِمِيْنَ وَالصّٰٓئِمٰتِ وَالْحٰفِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَالْحٰفِظٰتِ وَالذّٰكِرِيْنَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ ۙ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٣٥﴾[34]

This verse comprehensively states all positive and negative directives that were miscellaneously mentioned earlier. The purpose is to point out the attributes of the society envisaged by God and His Messenger. In other words, this verse actually places a mirror before believing men and women so that they can develop themselves in its light and at the same time protect themselves from the Hypocrite men and women. They were trying to lure them back into the desolate darkness of *jāhiliyyah* from which God and Messenger had rescued them. The attributes spelled out in this verse are ten and the miscellaneous directives given earlier are also amount to ten. Here, since the noble wives are specially addressed as the purpose is to delineate the building blocks of an Islamic society, women are mentioned with men side by side and not in a secondary way. Women constitute half of a society and also have the same rights as men. They have a greater role than men in the betterment of a society or otherwise.

The attributes enlisted in the verse are the following:

1. Obedience (*islām*)
2. Faith (*īmān*)
3. Dutifulness (*qunūt*)
4. Truthfulness (*ṣidq*)
5. Steadfastness (*ṣabr*)
6. Humility (*khushū'*)

---

34. Obedient men and obedient women, believing men and believing women, dutiful men and dutiful women, righteous men and righteous women, steadfast men and steadfast women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, chaste men and chaste women, men and women who remember God in abundance – for them, God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.

7. Charitableness (*ṣadaqah*)
8. Fasting (*ṣawm*)
9. Chastity (*'iffat*)
10. God's remembrance (*dhikrullāh*)

These attributes are ten in number. Deliberation shows that all aspects of Islamic morality and conduct are summed up in them, and since these are mentioned in the form of adjectives, they are meant to be found as persistent traits of the society. In other words, every person of the society, whether man or woman, must reflect on them.

Some of the attributes mentioned related to the rights of God and some others relate to the rights of human beings and some others to self-improvement.

Islām and *īmān* (obedience and faith) comprehensively refer to religion as a whole. The former is its outward aspect and the latter, its inner one.

Qunūt (dutifulness) occurs in verse 31 of this *sūrah*. It signifies being dutiful to God and His Messenger with full devotion, total compliance and complete sincerity.

Ṣidq (truthfulness) relates to complete harmony and strength of words, deeds and intention. In verse 23 earlier, it is said: صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ (those who fulfilled their promise with God). Viewed thus, it is the direct opposite of hypocrisy.

Ṣabr refers to perseverance, steadfastness and resoluteness. A person who stands like a wall against every fear and greed that arises from within him or outside him and is also satisfied and happy with God is a person endowed with *ṣabr*. It is on this trait that the whole edifice of religion stands.

Khushū' means humility and being down to earth. This is engendered in a person as a result of the true comprehension of God's greatness and majesty. This trait makes a person bend down before God and also makes him gentle and merciful towards fellow human beings. It is the opposite of arrogance which is the foundation of all individual and collective evils whether they belong to the rights of God or to human beings.

Taṣadduq means to be charitable. It specially relates to the rights of human beings. When a person curbs his desires and sacrifices his own needs to spend on others, then this testifies to his faith in God

and the Hereafter and this attitude gradually strengthens his faith.

Ṣawm produces self-control and self-discipline. I have discussed its effects while explaining verses 183-187 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Patience is the foundation of a person's character and fasting is the greatest means to engender patience in a person.

Ḥifẓ al-furūj signifies chastity and modesty which is the result of self-control. The most potent weapon in the hands of Satan to cause disruption in the society is that through his propaganda he destroys chaste and modest behaviour in men and women. Here too it has been mentioned that Hypocrite men and women would try to incite the noble wives to display their adornments and finery so that the whole Muslim society is lured into lewdness.

Dhikhrullāh is the fountainhead and guardian of all the afore-mentioned traits. The more a person remembers God, the more soundly these traits develop in his personality. It is God's remembrance which is in fact the guardian of the whole religion and the prayer is another name for this very remembrance. Thus, at many instances in the Qur'ān, the prayer is mentioned as the protector and guardian of religion and morality, and we have already discussed this aspect at these relevant places.

Section IV: Verses (36-48)

Coming up is the incident between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), and this also relates to what has been discussed in the previous section. Hypocrite men and women stirred up a lot of mischief with regard to this incident that gave rise to all sorts of questions. God answered all these questions which actually explain many aspects of religion.

For example:

– The right of God and His Messenger is the greatest. Hence, when in some matter, their intention is known, then a person's own intention must be brought in subservience to it.

– The obligation of a messenger as God's envoy is to urge people to God's directives and to implement them. So when God gives a directive, it is his duty to obey it and disregard any opposition or rebukes in this matter.

– The Prophet (sws) was directed to take practical steps to eradicate

the concept regarding the wife of an adopted son that prevailed in the *jāhiliyyah* period. He was emphatically directed to not care about any mischief that the miscreants create in this regard.

– Since Muḥammad (sws) was the last of God's prophets, it was essential that all aspects of religion be brought to a completion through him and no shortcomings remain in any aspect.

– A delineation of God's great favour to mankind by sending a Prophet to them and of the obligations this *ummah* owes to him.

Though these hints are enough to understand this section, yet detailed out below is a brief summary of the marriage of Zaynab (rta) and Zayd (rta) mentioned in these verses so that while discussing the verses minute details are not needed to be stated.

Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) belonged to the tribe of Kalb. He was caught in an enemy raid and enslaved. Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām bought him for his paternal aunt Khadījah (rta). When the latter married Muḥammad (sws), she gifted Zayd (rta) to him. In this manner, he got the coveted position of being his slave. How much Zayd (rta) valued this slavery can be gauged from the fact that when his father and uncle came over to demand his freedom from the Prophet (sws), he gave Zayd (rta) the choice to either go away with his father or remain with him. At this instance, the example set by Zayd (rta) for his love for the Prophet (sws) will be forever remembered in history. In spite of being granted the choice to freedom, he chose slavery of the Prophet (sws) instead. Ḥafiẓ, perhaps has penned the following couplet, in deference to this incident:

بولائے تو کہ گر بندہ خویشم خوانی

از سر خواجگیٔ کون و مکان بر خیزم

(I swear by your friendship that if you accept me as your slave, I will abandon the wealth and status of this world in exchange of this.)

After this, the Prophet (sws) set him free. He loved Zayd (rta) since the very beginning because of his qualities; however, this incident increased his love for him manifold. So much so, when people saw his love and attention towards Zayd (rta), they thought that perhaps he has made Zayd (rta) his adopted son.

It is evident from various incidents that Zayd (rta) had

administrative and martial qualities. At many instances, the Prophet (sws) deputed him as the leader of military campaigns. At times, he even remained the ruler of Madīnah in the absence of the Prophet (sws).

The Prophet (sws) wedded him to his paternal cousin, Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), to grant him favour and respect. She belonged to the tribe of Banū Asad. Her mother was Umaymah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. When the Prophet (sws) proposed Zayd (rta) to marry her, her relatives objected by saying that Zayd (rta) was a liberated slave and also not of the same status as Zaynab (rta). However, the Prophet (sws) wanted that the concepts of people about slaves should change and hence he insisted on this marriage. Finally, Zaynab (rta) expressed her consent and this marriage was formalized.

After this marriage, Hypocrite men and women launched this malicious propaganda that Muḥammad (sws) had wedded off a woman of noble descent to his liberated slave. A society does not easily accept such social reforms. Hence, this propaganda created an atmosphere of opposition against this marriage. Hypocrite women in particular tried their best to inveigle Zaynab (rta). They appealed to her that it was a matter of great injustice to be married to someone who was a former slave. Being a human being, this enticing talk must have had its affect on her.

Zayd (rta) was a sensitive and humble person who had a great self-esteem. In spite of the love and affection shown by the Prophet (sws), he had not forgotten his former status. On the other hand, Zaynab (rta) had a somewhat aggressive and forceful temperament. In normal circumstances, this does not impede a healthy social set up. However, since the Hypocrites had contaminated the atmosphere with their evil-mongering, Zayd (rta) began to think that Zaynab (rta) regards herself to be superior to him, and does not like this relationship. He finally decided to divorce her to relieve her of her misery and to also relieve himself of this burden. However, before taking a practical step in this regard he thought of finding out the opinion of the Prophet (sws) too because it was he who had been instrumental in making this marriage happen. When he mentioned his intent before the Prophet (sws), he asked him if something from her had created a doubt in his mind. Zayd (rta) replied in the negative and stated that she does have a consideration for her family nobility

and also expresses it and this hurts him. The Prophet (sws) emphatically stopped him from divorcing her and asked him to fear God in this matter because a mere personal impression is not a valid reason for divorce.

Zayd's intention to divorce Zaynab (rta) was worrisome for the Prophet (sws) for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, he himself had initiated this marriage for the realization of a noble objective. It was thus his natural desire, contrary to that of Hypocrite men and women that this turn out to be a successful union.

Secondly, this divorce would dent the social reputation of Zaynab (rta) very much and her grief would become twofold. First she had heard the reproaches of Hypocrite men and women on getting married to a liberated slave and second, in case of divorce, she would be called a divorcee of a liberated slave.

Thirdly, the Prophet (sws) considered himself responsible for the whole incident and hence regarded it essential to show extra affection to Zaynab (rta). In his heart, he thought that if this divorce takes place, the only option left to appease the emotions of Zaynab (rta) would be to marry her. However, in this situation there was a chance of an even greater ordeal taking place: people would say that the Prophet (sws) had married the wife of his adopted son. A further complexity in this regard was that the Prophet (sws) already had four wives and hence could not marry further.

As a result of all these reasons, the Prophet dearly wanted that Zayd (rta) not divorce his wife. So he emphatically stopped him from doing so. However, Zayd (rta) could not come to grips with his circumstances. He concluded that all this commotion was the result of his marriage and the only remedy to this situation was divorce, so that Zaynab (rta) is relieved of her ordeal and he too finds solace. He thus divorced her. Zaynab (rta) was grief-stricken on this. Narratives say that when she heard of this divorce the words اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَ اِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ (We are for God and to Him shall we return) spontaneously came out of her mouth.

When matters reached this extent, the Prophet (sws), as mentioned earlier, decided to marry Zaynab (rta) but because of the *jāhiliyyah* custom as per which the wife of an adopted son was prohibited for marriage and because he already had four wives, he was hesitant to

take this step. Finally, the Almighty bade him to marry disregarding any opposition from people so that this step could eradicate a wrong custom and an unnatural restriction that had found its way in a religion so akin to human nature is eliminated. As a result of this directive from God, the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab (rta).

Described above is the real form of the incident that I have gauged after critically evaluating all the narratives. The reason for these details is that the Orientalists have given it a very evil shape because of their exaggerations and fabrications and what is sorrowful is that they have gathered the content of these misrepresentations from the *tafsīr* and *sīrah* works of Muslim authors.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَ مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّ لَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗۤ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۳۶﴾ وَ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْۤ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَ تُخْفِيْ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِيْهِ وَ تَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰىهُ ؕ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِيْۤ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ؕ وَ كَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾ مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيْمَا فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ ؕ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَ كَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرَا ﴿۳۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ يَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَ لَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۳۹﴾ مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَ لٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَ خَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۴۰﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۴۱﴾ وَّ سَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا ﴿۴۲﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ مَلٰٓئِكَتُهٗ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا ﴿۴۳﴾ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۴۴﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَّ نَذِيْرًا ﴿۴۵﴾ وَّ دَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَ سِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿۴۶﴾ وَ بَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ لَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ دَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۴۸﴾

There is no room for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter, then they should have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed into open error. (36)

And when you were saying to him whom God and yourself have favoured: “Retain your wife and fear God,” and you were hiding in

your heart what God was to reveal. And you were afraid of people although God is more worthy that you fear Him. Thus when Zayd severed his relationship with her, We wedded her to you so that it should not be a difficulty for believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons when they break their relationship with them. And God's verdict had to be implemented. (37)

And there is no difficulty for the Prophet in what God has made obligatory upon him. This is the established practice of God regarding people of the past. And a time was fixed for God's verdict. They communicated the messages of God and feared him alone and did not fear anyone except God. And sufficient is God to take account. (38-39)

Muhammad is not father to any man among you. In fact, he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets. And God has knowledge of all things. (40)

Believers! Remember God in great abundance and extol him morning and evening. It is He Who sends His blessings on you and His angels too to bring you out from darkness into light and He is ever merciful to the believers. On the day they meet Him their greeting shall be: "Peace!" and He has prepared for them a rich recompense. (41-44)

O Prophet! We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner and as one who shall call men to God by His permission and as a shining lamp. And give glad tidings to the believers that there is a great blessing for them from God. And do not pay heed to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites and ignore the harms they cause. And trust God and sufficient is God to trust. (45-48)

Explanation

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا ۝[35]

This verse serves as a prelude to the incident coming up in the succeeding verses. What is said here is not merely related to Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta). It is a statement of a general principle. Earlier

35. There is no room for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter, then they should have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed into open error.

in verse 6, it was said: اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوۡلٰی بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ (and the right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another). In the light of this very premise, it is now stated as a principle that when God and His Messenger take a decision in a matter, then there is no room for any hesitancy for believing men and women. The decisions taken by a messenger of God is with His permission; Hence, the messenger must be obeyed in the absolute sense. No one after this has the right to object to these decisions or to disobey them. Those who disobey them will stray far into error.

It needs to be kept in mind that this injunction relates to the situation when it is clearly known that the Prophet has given an explicit directive. For sometimes, some of his statements were in the form of suggestions. Hence when the companions would come to know that these were not from God but from the Prophet (sws) himself, they presented their own counter suggestions as well and at times they were even accepted by him.

It is evident from the afore-mentioned details regarding Zayd (rta) and Zaynab's (rta) marriage that none of them defied the Prophet's decision. When the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta) for Zayd (rta), she knew that this was not a directive; it was merely a suggestion and she was free to express her willingness or otherwise. Later, when she came to know that this was the Prophet's wish that this marriage take place, she accepted the proposal. A similar situation arose when after Zayd's divorce, the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta). Here again she did not take this to be His decision and only regarded it to be a suggestion. Thereupon she had replied that she will not take a decision without doing *istikhārah*. Thus it was after *istikhārah* that she accepted this proposal.

Similarly, Zayd (rta) did not defy any directive of the Prophet (sws). He regarded the Prophet (sws) asking him to refrain from divorcing Zaynab (rta) as an advice and not a decision. He thought that if this was the wish of the Prophet (sws), then he should try to not divorce her; however, the final decision lies with him in this matter. Thus when he felt that it was not possible for him to pull along this marriage, he divorced her.

In my opinion, what is mentioned in the verse is a general principle whose revelation had been occasioned by the circumstances. It became evident from it that it is not permissible for believing men

and women to defy a directive of the Prophet (sws) in any circumstances. Such defiance would be against the requisites of faith, and he who is guilty of it strays far in error. It was essential to make this requirement of faith evident to Hypocrite men and women whose attitude is under discussion since the very beginning of this *sūrah* so that they get around to obey him completely. However, if they are not ready to do this, they should get ready to face its consequences.

وَاِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِیْٓ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَاَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِ اَمْسِكْ عَلَیْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَتُخْفِیْ فِیْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِیْهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰىهُ ؕ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَیْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَیْ لَا یَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ حَرَجٌ فِیْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِیَآىِٕهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾[36]

This verse alludes to the actual incident. Zayd (rta) is mentioned here by the attribute: اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِ. In other words, he was someone who found favour with both God and His Messenger. There is a special reason for mentioning him with this attribute. It has been mentioned earlier that Hypocrite men and women tried their best to belittle him in the eyes of people by labeling him a slave so that they succeed in their proposed malicious campaign. It is evident how hurt Zayd (rta) would have been by this but he remained fully patient. It was a result of this patience that God rewarded him by mentioning him with this attribute. This would make it clear upon those who had tried to humiliate him that he whom they wanted to disgrace has found favour with God and His Messenger. Obviously one who has found favour at such a level does not need any other accolade.

God's favour is generally granted to everyone. Whatever a person gets is from God. However, if Zayd's (rta) matter is reflected upon, one will realize that his case was similar to that of Joseph (sws). He was imprisoned in a plunder raid and probably remained the slave of a Christian and then was sold in this capacity. Finally, the Almighty

36. And when were saying to him whom God and yourself have favoured: "Retain your wife and fear God," and you were hiding in your heart what God was to reveal. And you were afraid of people although God is more worthy that you fear Him. Thus when Zayd severed his relationship with her, We wedded her to you so that it should not be a difficulty for believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons when they break their relationship with them. And God's verdict had to be implemented.

through His own planning gradually led him to the Prophet (sws). After this, the doors of blessings opened to him both in religious and in worldly affairs.

The Prophet's favour on him was that as a result of serving him, Zayd (rta) was blessed with the treasure of Islam. He showed such love and affection to him that people thought that he was his adopted son. The Prophet (sws) liberated him from slavery and wedded him to his cousin sister. This meant that Zayd (rta) entered the house of the Prophet (sws). No familial honour can be greater than this.

The words وَ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ before اَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ shows that the Prophet (sws) must have repeatedly requested Zayd (rta) to not divorce Zaynab (rta) and fear God. Had he said this only once, the word used should have been قُلْتَ instead of تَقُوْلُ. It is evident from this that Zayd (rta) must have expressed his intention many times before the Prophet (sws) and each time he was stopped by him and asked to fear God.

It is also evident from the words وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ that the Prophet (sws) must have said the words to emphatically stop Zayd (rta) and did not find it appropriate for him to take this step. It has been mentioned earlier that when the Prophet (sws) had asked him if the reason for his divorce was something that Zaynab (rta) had done, he had emphatically replied in the negative. The only grievance that he himself had was expressed by him in the words تتعظم علی لشرفها (because of her noble lineage she has a sense of superiority over me). Obviously, this is not enough to divorce a wife. This could be because of Zayd's (rta) own over sensitivity than that of Zaynab's (rta) air of superiority especially in the atmosphere which had been created by Hypocrite men and women. It is because of this background that the Prophet (sws) asked him to fear God and not take a step in frenzy. However, Zayd (rta) was deeply influenced by the propaganda raised by the opposition and this owed much to his own decency and a regard for Zaynab's (rta) emotions. He felt that because of him Zaynab (rta) is being targeted and jeered at. The only remedy to this is to divorce her and provide her solace from the sharp tongues of the critics.

This sentence وَ تُخْفِيْ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِيْهِ وَ تَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰهُ is grammatically in the category of state (*hāl*) ie.: when you were telling Zayd not to divorce his wife and fear God at times you were

hiding something in your heart which God was to reveal however.

I will not comment on the baseless narratives which some of our careless exegetes have cited while explaining the above words. In this regard, Ibn Kathīr has very rightly said:[37] احببنا ان نضرب عنها صفحا لعدم صحتها فلا نوردها (These narratives are baseless; hence we have ignored them and am not citing them here). I agree with this comment. I regard it to be a sin to cite them even for the purpose of refutation. May God forgive Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. He does not exercise caution in citing narratives.

I have already alluded to the real nature of the incident. Since the Prophet (sws) was instrumental for this marriage because he wanted to raise the status of slaves, it was his deep desire that it should succeed. Thus he emphatically tried to stop Zayd (rta) from divorcing her. The Prophet (sws) reckoned that if this divorce takes place, Zaynab (rta) will doubly feel its brunt: she bore the censuring of her enemies and later was afflicted with the stigma of being a divorcee of a liberated slave. The only option that would be left to comfort and solace her and to make amends for this situation would be that he himself marry her. However, doing this was sure to produce a great propaganda and mischief from the Hypocrites as they would say the he had married the wife of his adopted son. He did not want to get involved in this. Thus he dearly desired that this divorce not take place. However, God wanted that it does take place so that through the hands of the Prophet (sws) a wrong custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period be reformed. God also wanted that messengers should not care about the rebukes of the critics in matters of religion and practically show this.

The words وَ تَخۡشَی النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰہُ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ تَخۡشٰہُ refer to the same principle alluded to in verse 1-3 and 7 of this *sūrah*. In verses 38-39, a further explanation of this principle is coming up. The greatest impediment in the way of adhering to the precepts of religion is fear of people and interests. For this reason, the Almighty has imposed this responsibility on His messengers that in matters of religion they should fear God and give regard to no one except Him. Thus the whole history of God's messengers bears witness that they braved the storms of this path and faced the greatest of dangers to discharge this

37. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 492.

responsibility. They left this practice of theirs as an example for those after them who would take up the duty of serving religion the way they did.

The words فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا imply that when Zayd (rta) completely severed his relationship from Zaynab (rta), the Almighty made arrangements to reveal the secret the Prophet (sws) harboured in his heart which he did not want to reveal for fear of rebukes from people. The Almighty Himself wedded him to Zaynab (rta) so that the unnatural prohibition of marriage with the wife of an adopted son is done away with and an unwanted restriction in this matter is lifted from people.

The word وَطَرًا means "need" and "requirement." From here the meaning of relationship and association is incorporated in it. A person necessarily gets associated with what he needs. The words قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا mean that Zayd (rta) totally severed his relationship from Zaynab (rta). The benefit of using this word instead of the word divorce is that it refers to the end of the post-divorce *'iddat* period as well after which a husband's relationship with his wife completely ends.

The word زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا implies that the Prophet (sws) was hesitant in this marriage because of fear from people's comments but God through His directive wedded her to him. It is evident from this that the Prophet (sws) undertook this marriage at God's behest. It is mentioned in historical narratives that after the *'iddat* period had ended, the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta) through Zayd (rta) himself. She accepted the proposal after doing *istikhārah*. Her brother, Abū Aḥmad ibn Jaḥash solemnized this marriage. The Prophet (sws) fixed the dower at 400 *dirhams* and threw a very elaborate wedding banquet (*walīmah*). Some people have concluded from the word زَوَّجْنَا that the wedding took place in the heavens and no need arose to have it conducted on earth. However, Ibn Hishām has mentioned the details of this marriage which I have alluded to above. Hence, the correct version of this incident is that at the behest of God, this marriage was conducted in the way marriages have been prescribed by God and His Messenger.

The words وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا imply that when the time came for the reformation of this *jāhiliyyah* custom, it was set right at that time

according to the divinely prescribed methodology. The propaganda and mischief of the enemies could not the slightest hamper this scheme of God.

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيْمَا فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ ؕ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرَا ۙ﴿۳۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۳۹﴾[38]

These verses sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): these phases of his life are not meant to put him into some bother or discomfort nor are they specific to him. All previous messengers have also passed through them. This is an established practice of God which He has fixed in accordance with His wisdom. In other words, such difficult circumstances faced by messengers of God are meant to instruct and test them and befall them precisely as God has ordained for them. These tests bring to the fore their hidden potentials and the sincerity or the lack of it on the part of their followers.

The expression فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ has a different meaning from فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْه. The latter means that God has made something obligatory on someone while the former means that God has ordained certain circumstances for someone.

The linguistic style found in سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ can be seen in earlier verses of the Qur'ān. If all the suppressed parts of this sentence are accounted for, it will be something to the effect: سَنَّ اللّٰهُ ذَالِكَ سُنَّةً فِي الاَنْبِيَآءِ (This is an established practice prescribed by God for His prophets).

The words وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرًا imply that God had fixed a time for the implementation of His decision. When it came, it was implemented. It is evident from this that nothing in life occurs by chance. It occurs in accordance with the program set for it by God. Hence one should not get worried by a matter by attributing to chance. Nor should one ignore it. It should be considered from God and should be faced in a manner that befits the requirement of faith.

---

38. And there is no difficulty for the Prophet in what God has made obligatory upon him. This is the established practice of God regarding people of the past. And a time was fixed for God's verdict. They communicated the messages of God and feared him alone and did not fear anyone except God. And sufficient is God to take account.

The words الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ imply that it is the attribute of the previous prophets that they would communicate the messages of God and they never cared for anyone in this matter other than God. In other words, the responsibility the Almighty imposed on the previous prophets and which they discharged by disregarding the reproaches of a reproacher has been imposed by Him on Muḥammad (sws) as well. Hence it is his obligation as well to discharge it by disregarding the reproaches of a reproacher the way his predecessors did.

Ibn Kathīr and al-Zamakhsharī[39] are of the opinion that the word حَسِيْب in وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا means "helper." In other words, God is sufficient to protect people from all dangers. If this interpretation is accepted, the context is very evident, and if this word is interpreted in its general meaning of "someone who takes account," then this part of the verse will serve as a warning. It would imply that if there is any negligence in communicating the message of God because of fearing others or giving regard to them, then it must be kept in mind that God is sufficient to take account.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۴۰﴾[40]

This verse addresses those people who by regarding the Prophet (sws) as the father of Zayd (rta) had worked up this whole mischief and propaganda. The verse states that Muḥammad (sws) is father to no man; he is God's messenger and the seal of prophets. He has discharged his responsibility imposed on him in the capacity of a prophet and messenger of God, and since he is also the last of the prophets, it is essential that this evil custom be reformed through him. Had there been the possibility of another prophet after him, God could have delayed this reformation; however, no prophet was to come and religion had to reach its completion through him. Hence every deviant and wavered practice had to be set right through him.

---

39. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 493; al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāff*, vol. 3, 552.

40. Muhammad is not father to any man among you. In fact, he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets. And God has knowledge of all things.

The implication is that his matter must not be viewed in the light of various hypothetical statements people have formed; it should be viewed in the light of his real position and status and the responsibility it entails. If his addressees do not recognize his real position and status, they will find objections in many other spheres as well whereas he has to undertake matters in these spheres as directed by the Almighty while disregarding all reproaches. His foremost addressees must also bear in mind that he is a messenger of God sent to them. If they deny him, they will not be able to escape from the established practice of God He has prescribed for those who deny His messengers and which always materialized.

The words مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ primarily dispel the misconception in which those people were afflicted with who had come to regard the Prophet (sws) to be Zayd's (rta) father. However, it was not merely said that the Prophet (sws) is not the father of Zayd (rta); the words actually say that he is father to no man. This has added stress in the whole statement and it also reflects the actual situation because all of the Prophet's male offspring died in infancy and thus could not technically be called men (رِّجَال).

Consider next the portion: وَ لٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَ خَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ. The difference between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) has been explained at many instances of this *tafsīr*. Here this much should be kept in mind that the relationship between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) is that of the general and the specific. Every messenger (*rasūl*) is always a prophet (*nabī*) but the reverse is not necessarily true. Hence if Muḥammad (sws) is the final prophet, then he is all the more the final messenger. Some deviant sects say that the Qur'ān has regarded him as the final prophet (خاتم الانبیاء) but not the final messenger (خاتم الرسل) and hence this does not terminate all components of messengerhood. However, this view is based on mere ignorance.

According to lexicographers, خَاتَمْ and خَاتِمْ have the same meaning. It can connote the last person of a community, the fate of a thing and the seal at the end of a letter.

Consider next the portion: وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا. The implication is that those who have created all this rumpus should know that God is more aware of all things than they. He knows both Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta) as well has His own Messenger. He is also fully aware of His Messenger's relationship with the two of them. None of this is

beyond His knowledge. Whatever happened was at His behest and permission. Hence, creating commotion against this is mere ignorance and foolishness. Trusting God's knowledge and wisdom is a requirement of faith. People should give due importance to the corrective measure undertaken. Only the all-embracing knowledge of God can understand the subtleties and wisdom of everything. Others cannot fully grasp all His wisdom.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤١﴾ وَّسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا ﴿٤٢﴾[41]

This verse emphasizes upon Muslims to resolutely stand against the opposition created by the Hypocrites and the mischief mongers. The methodology suggested for this is that while disregarding their rumpus they should engage more and more in remembering God and in extolling Him by night and by day. It should be kept in mind that the real shield through which believers have to counter the onslaught of Satan and his progeny is God's remembrance. For this very reason, wherever in the Qur'ān believers have been advised to show perseverance against their enemies, they have been specially directed to the prayer. The relationship between perseverance and the prayer has been delineated at several instances in this *tafsīr*.[42]

Consider the verse: وَّسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا. Here تسبیح symbolizes the prayer. It is in fact the mention of the specific after the general. Remembrance (ذکر) like breathing is needed all the time. However, God and His Messenger have prescribed certain times for the prayer. A comprehensive expression of this is بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا (by morning and by evening). In this timetable of morning and evening, the timings of the prayers have been prescribed. I have already alluded to this. Readers may look up the explanation of verse 78 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl and verse 130 of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتُهٗ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا ﴿٤٣﴾[43]

---

41. Believers! remember God in great abundance and extol him morning and evening.

42. See, for example, my explanation of verse 45 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

43. It is He Who sends His blessings on you and His angels too to bring you out from darkness into light and He is ever merciful to the believers.

These words state the blessings of remembering God in abundance: He sends down His mercy on His believers and His angels too continue to pray to God to grant His mercy to the believers.

The words لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ state the blessings of this mercy: He leads the believers to light from darkness. Here, darkness obviously refers to the darkness of beliefs and light refers to the light of guidance. The words وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا state the attribute of God that He is very merciful to the believers.

The word يُصَلِّيْ when used with reference to God will allude to His mercy and when used with reference to the angels will mean their prayer for mercy. Several examples of change in meaning with the change in the entity it is ascribed to occur in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic literature. This word is used in two different meanings in this very *sūrah*: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَ مَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ؕ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿۵۶﴾ (Indeed, God sends His mercy to His Prophet and His angels also pray that mercy be granted to him; so, Believers! You too pray for him.)

The closing words وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا of the verse under discussion also show that the word يُصَلِّيْ means that God will show His mercy to the Prophet (sws).

The fact that angels seek forgiveness for the believers is mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān as well. Thus, in Sūrah al-Mu'min, the words are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَ مَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّ عِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَ اتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَ قِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ (۴۰:۷)

Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: "Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so, forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell." (40:7)

In Sūrah al-Shūrā, it is said:

وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ (٤٢: ٥)

And the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. (42:5)

تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿٤٤﴾[44]

The previous verse mentions the mercy and blessings of God which envelop a person in this world. This verse mentions the salutations which the believers will receive from God and His messengers in the Hereafter. It is said that when these people will meet their Lord in the Hereafter, they will be greeted with the salutation of *salām* and God would have prepared for them a very honourable recompense.

The word تَحِيَّةٌ is affixed to its object and its correct meaning is "greeting." It is also mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān that the dwellers of Paradise will receive *salām* (peace) from God and the angels too will greet them by these words.

In Sūrah al-Furqān, it is mentioned:

وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيْهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّ سَلٰمًا (٢٥: ٧٥)

And on that day, they will be welcomed with greetings and *salām*. (25:75).

In Sūrah Yāsīn, the words used are:

سَلٰمٌ ۣ قَوْلًا مِّنْ رَّبٍّ رَّحِيْمٍ (٣٦: ٥٨)

They shall be conveyed *salām* from the Merciful Lord. (36:58)

In Sūrah al-Zumar it is specified that the angels who would be keepers of Paradise shall welcome them with *salām*:

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ (٣٩: ٧٣)

And the keepers of Paradise will say to them: "*salām*" be to you! Be happy; enter it forever. (39:73)

---

44. On the day they meet Him their greeting shall be: "Peace!" and He has prepared for them a rich recompense.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ﴿۴۵﴾ وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿۴۶﴾[45]

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and informs him of his status and position, and also alludes to the responsibilities this position entails. The purpose is to make evident to the Prophet (sws) his assignments and the way to achieve them and at the same time make clear to others the real nature of his person so that both the opponents and the proponents can evaluate their attitudes in the light of this. The verse states that the Prophet (sws) has been sent as a شَاهِدً and مُبَشِّرً and نَذِيْرً. The word شَاهِدً means someone who bears witness to the directives of God and to the attitude that earns His pleasure. The real objective of a messenger is to tell people about things which God has enjoined and those which He has forbidden.

The expression مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا means that the Prophet (sws) should give glad tidings to people who accept his message and to warn people of the consequences of rejecting it. After these glad tidings and warnings, his responsibility of bearing witness stands fulfilled. It is not his responsibility whether people accept his message or reject it and if they accept it, did they accept it with hesitation. All these matters relate to God.

The words وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ are further explanation of what is just said: God has directed the Prophet (sws) to call people towards Him so that people leave aside Satan and his progeny and come towards God. The conditional word بِاِذْنِهٖ is to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws): since God Himself has appointed him to call people towards God, He will not leave the Prophet (sws) alone. In fact, He will help and guide him at every step. The implication is that Muḥammad (sws) is not a self-styled prophet so that God will leave him to wander about. It is God Who has made him a prophet and hence He will help him in discharging this obligation and in spite of the opposition of his enemies will make him succeed in his mission.

The words سِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا state that God has made the Prophet (sws) a shinning lamp which is lit up with the radiance of knowledge and

45. O Prophet! We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner and as one who shall call men to God by His permission and as a shining lamp.

wisdom and will also bring others out from darkness to the straight path of God. If people do not duly value him, they will not harm him in any way; they will, in fact, only hasten their own doom. They will go astray in this world and become the firewood of Hell in the Hereafter.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾[46]

This verse explains the work of the Prophet (sws) as a bearer of glad tidings: he should give glad tidings to those who profess faith in his message that they should not become anxious at the opposition put up by their enemy nor be worried in adverse circumstances: a great blessing from God awaits them if they remain steadfast on their faith.

وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَدَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٤٨﴾[47]

This verse explains the work of the Prophet (sws) as a warner. However, instead of addressing those who were opposing the Prophet (sws) and asking them to do something, God has directly addressed him and told him what attitude he should adopt regarding them. Concealed in this attitude is the warning for the opposition that insinuates their fate. The verse asks him to pay no heed to what these disbelievers and Hypocrites say, ignore their mischief and trust God alone. God is sufficient to be trusted. The assurance found in this verse exudes from every word of it and the wrath found in it for his enemies is also fully evident from each word.

The word اِطَاعَةٌ in the expression وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ means to pay heed and give importance and regard. This is one of the common meanings of the word. I have already cited parallel verses at an appropriate instance in this *tafsīr* in which it is used in this meaning.

The word اَذٰى in وَ دَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ refers to harms inflicted and excesses committed by the Hypocrites in the matter of Zaynab (rta) and earlier in the matter of ‘Ā’ishah (rta). More of these excesses are mentioned later in this *sūrah*. The word دَعْ signifies leaving them by showing

46. And give glad tidings to the believers that there is a great blessing for them from God.

47. And do not pay heed to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites and ignore the harms they cause. And trust God and sufficient is God to trust.

disgust at their attitude.

In the words وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا a tremendous assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) and an even greater threat to his opponents. The Prophet (sws) should leave their matter to God, Who is sufficient to deal with them.

Finality of Prophethood

An explanation of all the essential teachings of the previous section of verses has been furnished below each verse earlier. However, certain aspects of the finality of prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) mentioned in verse 40 need further explanation. Briefly put, they are as follows:

1. The most important thing to be noted in this regard is that in the history of the prophets of God and the record of their sayings and teachings found in ancient scriptures and the Qur'ān or in books of history, neither has God informed us that any of the prophets from Adam (sws) to Jesus (rta) is the final prophet nor any of these prophets has claimed to be the final prophet. On the contrary, each prophet has prophesied about the next one after him. Angels had objections on the *khilāfah* of Adam (sws) and his progeny. It has been mentioned in the explanation of the relevant verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah that by enumerating the names of the prophets, Adam (sws) tried to allay the fears of the angels. The history of prophets before Abraham (sws) is not found anywhere. However, his own history and that of other prophets after him are mentioned both in the Torah and in the Qur'ān. The supplication made by Abraham (sws) regarding sending prophets in both branches of his descendents – the progeny of Isaac (sws) and the progeny of Ishmael (sws) – and the acceptance of this supplication by the Almighty are mentioned both in the Qur'ān and in the Torah and the Talmud. I have cited relevant references at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. After studying the details of the various prophets that came among the Israelites after Abraham (sws), it becomes evident that each prophet not only prophesied about the next one, but in many cases in accordance with the Israelite tradition even introduced him to people by baptism. The greatest of the Israelite prophets was Moses (sws). His predictions are mentioned in the Torah and the Qur'ān has also alluded to them.

He has also predicted about Muḥammad (sws), the seal of the prophets. It has already been cited under verse 157 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. John (sws) is one of the last prophets of the Israelites. He has stated that his mission was to clear the way for the prophet after him. He was actually referring to Jesus (sws). When Jesus (sws) began preaching John (sws) was in prison. From there he sent a message to Jesus (sws) asking him: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” (Matthew, 11:3). At this, Jesus (sws) replied: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. (Matthew, 11:5).

After this answer, John (sws) was satisfied that his mission had been fulfilled. After John (sws), the last prophet and messenger among the Israelites was Jesus (sws). He predicted the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) and that too by his name. In Sūrah al-Ṣaff, this prediction is mentioned thus:

وَاِذْ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًۢا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِى اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ (٦١: ٦)

And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: “O Israelites! I am sent forth to you as a Messenger of God in realization of the predictions which exist before me, and to give glad tidings of a messenger who will come after me. His name is Ahmad.” (61:6)

The predictions of Jesus (sws) regarding Muḥammad (sws) in the Gospels have been cited in this *tafsīr* while explaining verse 157 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. In the opinion of my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven given by Jesus (sws) in the Gospels and the parables he has mentioned in this regard all relate to the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) and its attributes.

In short, it has remained the practice of all prophets of God till Muḥammad (sws) that every prophet would give glad tidings of the prophet who was to follow him; however, on Muḥammad (sws) this practice completely ends. God has unequivocally called him the seal of the prophets and not only has Muḥammad (sws) not predicted the advent of any prophet after him; in fact, he very clearly and explicitly stated and proclaimed a number of times that he is the last prophet and no prophet will come after him. Every reasonable person can

understand that if there was even a slight possibility of a prophet coming after Muḥammad (sws), then in accordance with the tradition of all prophets, Muḥammad (sws) would have made a prediction in his favour. And if he made no such prediction, then at least he should not have so emphatically closed the doors of the institution of propehthood so that a person who tries to open it be regarded as a robber.

2. It would occupy much space if the various narratives ascribed to the Prophet (sws) in this regard are cited. I will only refer to a few such narratives which have become so famous as to reach the status of *tawātur*:

قال النبی صلی الله علیه و سلم اِنَّ مَثَلِی وَمَثَلَ الْاَنْبِیَاءِ من قَبْلِی کَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنٰی بَیْتًا فَاَحْسَنَهُ وَاَجْمَلَهُ الا مَوْضِعَ لَبِنَةٍ من زَاوِیَةٍ فَجَعَلَ الناس یَطُوفُونَ بِهِ وَیَعْجَبُونَ له وَیَقُولُونَ هَلَّا وُضِعَتْ هذه اللَّبِنَةُ قال فَاَنَا اللَّبِنَةُ وانا خَاتِمُ النَّبِیِّینَ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "I and the prophets before me can be likened to a person who constructed a beautiful building but in a corner there was a gap for a brick. People would roam around this building and express their wonder on it and would ask: 'Why was this brick not placed at its place.' So I am that brick and I am the seal of the prophets."[48]

It needs to be kept in mind about the above narrative that Jesus (sws) has also prophesied the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) in almost the same words. He is reported to have said: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (Matthew, 21:42). Various details of the way Jewish scholars have tried to conceal the predictions about the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) have already been referred to in the explanation of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In spite of all these efforts, the status the Almighty had ordained for Muḥammad (sws) was conferred on him at all cost. He became the last brick of the palace of the *sharī'ah* and also the final prophet and messenger of God.

The finality of prophethood is also the essential consequence of the completion of religion mentioned in the verse: اَلْیَوْمَ اَکْمَلْتُ لَکُمْ دِیْنَکُمْ (Today We have completed your religion for you, (5:3)). Had religion

48. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1300. (no. 3341).

belonged to the category of things which never needed completion, then the prophets and messengers were indeed needed continuously. However, once religion was brought to completion – and no one can deny this obvious fact – then as a necessary consequence of this it has to be accepted that the institution of prophethood and messengerhood ended. It is this reality which the Prophet (sws) has explained in the following narrative and in such a variety of ways that no reasonable person is left with any room for doubt:

قال رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم اِنَّ الرِّسَالَةَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ قد انْقَطَعَتْ فلا رَسُولَ بَعْدِی ولا نَبِیَّ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "The [institutions of] messengerhood and prophethood have terminated after me. Neither a messenger nor a prophet will now come."[49]

In a narrative[50] in which the Prophet (sws) has recounted his six distinctions over the other prophets, the distinction that he has alluded to at the end is: خُتِمَ بِیَ النَّبِیُّونَ (the chain of prophethood has culminated on me).

Similarly, in another narrative[51] he has mentioned his various names. The last of these is عاقب and he himself has explained it as: الذی لیس بعدہ النبی (after whom no prophet will come).

3. It may be kept in mind that *nubuwwah* (prophethood) is not of various types. It only has one type which is the one mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth with all its requisites and attributes. However, there is a difference between a prophet and a messenger which has been alluded to above and which has been explained in detail at other places of this *tafsīr*. Certain deviant sects have tried to break into the sacred edifice of prophethood by citing many types of prophethood. They claim that the prophethood whose termination is mentioned in the Qur'ān is different from the prophethood they lay claim to. This classification of prophethood is self-styled on their part. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth do not mention them and not even vaguely allude to them. By making categories of prophethood, they have tried to lessen the disbelief they have committed; yet this effort for them has only

49. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 533, (no. 2722).
50. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 371, (no. 523).
51. Ibid., vol. 4, 1828, (no. 2354).

increased its intensity and filthiness. This is because this categorization has totally disrupted the structure of prophethood on whose foundation its edifice stands. It is not possible to fully deal with this issue here. However, readers may keep in mind this fact that the emphasis with which the Prophet (sws) has declared the termination of his propethood, with the same stress he has also clarified whether after him any component of prophethood will remain or not, and if it does then what its nature would be and who would receive a share from it.

It is narrated by Anas ibn Mālik (rta):

قال رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم اِنَّ الرِّسَالَةَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ قد انْقَطَعَتْ فلا رَسُولَ بَعْدِی ولا نَبِیَّ قال فَشَقَّ ذلك على الناس فقال لَكِنْ الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قالوا يا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ وما الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قال رُؤْيَا الْمُسْلِمِ وَهِیَ جُزْءٌ من اَجْزَاءِ النُّبُوَّةِ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "The [institutions of] messengerhood and prophethood have been terminated after me. Neither a messenger nor a prophet will now come." [A narrator said:] This statement of the Prophet (sws) weighed heavily upon people; so the Prophet (sws) said: "*Mubashsharāt* do remain." People asked: "God's Messenger! What are the *mubashsharāt*?" He replied: "the dream of a Muslim and this is from among the components of prophthood."[52]

Some narratives explain the meaning of مُبَشِّرَاتُ as الرؤيا الحسنة (nice dream) and الرؤيا الصالحة (good dream).

The above cited narrative helps us in ascertaining certain facts.

Firstly, after Muḥammad (sws), the institution of divine revelation has been terminated. The only component left from the institution of prophethood is good dreams that a person sees. This Ḥadīth negates the claim of people to divine inspiration, divine experience and divine visions.

Secondly, good dreams can be seen by any Muslim or true believer. They are not specific to anyone. No one acquires any status of prophethood by seeing such dreams nor are these dreams a means of a conclusive directive or insinuation to a person. If a person has seen

52. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 533, (no. 2722).

a good dream it can be a type of good news and good omen for him. They have no status beyond this.

Thirdly, terms like *ẓillī nubuwwah* or *burūzī nubuwwah* (shadow prophethood) are totally satanic in nature. If they had any status, the Prophet (sws) at this instance in order to appease people would have said that they should not be anxious as after him shadow prophets will still come after him.

Fourthly, the arrangement made by God to protect the Qur'ān is a necessary consequence of termination of prophethood. No arrangement of the sort made to protect the Qur'ān was made with the scriptures and teachings of the prophets that came before Muḥammad (sws). This is because before him prophethood was in process. If people would forget or change the teachings of a prophet, the next prophet would revive the original teachings and also inform people of any additions made by God. However, since after the Prophet (sws), the institution of revelation was terminated and religion too reached its completion, it became necessary to protect and preserve the Qur'ān to such an extent that no man or jinn is able to cause any disruption in it till the Day of Judgement. Thus, it is a fact that the Almighty has preserved the Qur'ān in such a manner that no one can make the slightest alteration in it. The real divine barometer to judge good and evil is the Qur'ān. If it is preserved in its original form, no need remains of any divine revelation, inspiration or dialogue with God and since a prophet is needed for these very aspects hence now not even he is required. As for the obligations of *shahādah 'alā al-nās* (bearing witness to the truth before people) and reforming people, they rest with the *ummah* in its collective capacity. Scholars will be held accountable for this before God. It has been mentioned in Aḥādīth that scholars and reformers will continue to be born in this *ummah* who will try to reform the evils created by mischief-mongers even though they may be few in number.

Fifthly, it is evident from all these details that there is no possibility of any prophet appearing before the Day of Judgement. This inference is validated by the Qur'ān and Sunnah and human nature and intellect also vouch for it. If something in the narratives of the Prophet (sws) and his companions comes before our readers which is against these explicit directives, they must reflect on it. If the two can be reconciled on deliberation, then no issue remains. However, if no such reconciliation can be made, then preference must be given to the

Qur'ān and the established precepts of religion. I have tried to evaluate all historical narratives on this standard. In my opinion, all of them can be reconciled in the manner stated above. However, there is no room here to go into such details.

Section V: Verses (49-52)

Readers must fully grasp the background of this section of verses since because of its concise and terse nature our exegetes were faced with many complexities in deciphering it.

These verses are basically a supplement to verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which the directive of polygamy is mentioned for common Muslims. After the revelation of this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' Muslims who had more than four wives divorced the excess ones, yet it is not proven if the Prophet (sws) too did so. The reason is that till that time he had only four wives. Later, when he married Zaynab (rta), the Hypocrites objected to it by saying that he has his own *sharī'ah* than the rest of his followers. In order to shut the mouths of these Hypocrites, the Almighty has explained here the special permission granted to the Prophet (sws) with regard to his wives.

This permission has the following salient features:

1. The wives whose dowries have been paid by the Prophet (sws) are legally permissible to him without any exception.
2. If he wanted to marry slave-maidens received by him in a battle after liberating them, he could do so.
3. He could marry any woman among his close relatives who had migrated with him for the cause of religion after leaving their own relatives.
4. He could marry a believing woman who gifted herself to him.
5. Since all these marriages were conducted to benefit religion and the Muslim community, the restrictions imposed regarding marital rights on common Muslim were lifted from him.

With this freedom, two extra restrictions were imposed on the Prophet (sws) which common Muslims were not required to abide by:

1. He could not marry beyond the sphere specified above.
2. He could not divorce his wives.

This freedom and these restrictions are based on certain underlying reasons and benefits that must be understood:

All the marriages of the Prophet (sws) took place because of religious and political reasons as well as to sympathize, comfort and reassure certain women. Readers have studied under verse 34 that the noble wives of the Prophet (sws) were also given a share in the mission responsibility imposed on the Prophet. It was as if this was the real objective for which they had been chosen to marry him. History and Ḥadīth books bear ample testimony to the majestic and commendable way in which these noble wives fulfilled this responsibility. In this regard, of special mention are ‘Ā’ishah (rta), Umm Salamah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta) and Maymūnah (rta). If they did not exceed men in this regard, they did not remain behind them as well. The teachings of the Prophet (sws) regarding women were spread through these wives in particular and could have spread only through them.

The circumstances in which the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab (rta) have already been described earlier. She chose to become a target of the jeers and taunts of her brother and other relatives merely to play her role in reforming a social evil, and respected the desire of the Prophet (sws) in this regard. The only way she could be aptly compensated for her sacrifices was that the Prophet (sws) marry her after she was divorced by Zayd (rta). Then like Zayd (rta), the Prophet’s marriage with her became a source of a great social reformation. In this regard, she also had to tolerate the nonsensical remarks of Hypocrite men and women. However, to earn the pleasure of God and His Prophet (sws) she bore all this.

Umm Ḥabībah (rta) had migrated to Abyssinia with her husband ‘Ubaydullāh. The reason for this migration was to seek respite from the persecution and oppression of the Quraysh. After some time there, her husband converted to Christianity. In that alien land, she chose to be separated from her husband and live alone in helplessness; however, she remained steadfast on her religion. The Prophet (sws) proposed to her in return for this perseverance and strength shown by her. Everyone can see that if ever this perseverance could be rewarded in this world, it could only have been if she becomes the wife of the Prophet (sws).

As regards the Prophet’s (sws) marriage with Jawayriyyah (rta) and Ṣafiyyah (rta) they were given to him as spoils of war from the battles of Banī Muṣtaliq and Khaybar respectively. Both of them were daughters of tribal chiefs. The Prophet (sws) did not deem it

appropriate to keep them as slave women given their noble lineage. He liberated them and then married them. The political wisdom behind these marriages is very evident.

Some women among the Companions only wanted to have the honour of being associated to the Prophet (sws). Among such women, this honour was bestowed on Maymūnah (rta). Her request was accepted by the Prophet (sws), and it is evident from various narratives that the person who played a key role in the acceptance of this request was ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet (sws).

A very similar case to Maymūnah (rta) was that of Sawdah (rta). Her details show that the only desire she had was to merely have an association with the Prophet (sws).

It is evident from these details that the matter of the Prophet (sws) regarding marriage and divorce was not the one that he should have the same restrictions as other Muslims. Had this been done, much expediency would have been sacrificed. For this reason, the Almighty revealed a special law for him. This law had the capacity in it to cater for the religious expediencies referred to earlier, and at the same time had certain restrictions which were not imposed on common Muslims. It is evident from this that the latitude given to the Prophet (sws) was entirely based on certain underlying reasons. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ
تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ
اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ
خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ۡ وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۗ
خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۭ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا
يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥٠﴾ تُرْجِيْ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُــــْٔوِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ ۭ وَمَنِ
ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ
كُلُّهُنَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا ﴿٥١﴾ لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاۗءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ
تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Believers! When you marry believing women and divorce them before consummating the marriage, you are not required to observe the waiting period. Thus give them well and let them go honourably. (49)

O Prophet! We have made lawful to you the wives whose dowers have been paid by you and free women whom God gives in your possession from the spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts who migrated with you and any believing woman who gifts herself to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to marry her. This directive is specifically for you alone, separate from the believers. We very well know what We have imposed on them as obligations regarding their wives and slave girls so that there be no difficulty for you and God is Forgiving and Merciful. You can keep any of them away from you and keep any of them near you and it is allowed to you to bring any of them near you whom you have kept away. This is more proper so that they be contented and not be sorrowful – and feel satisfied with whatever you give all of them. And God knows what is in your hearts and God is All-Knowing and Most-Forbearing. All other women besides these are not lawful for you nor is it lawful to you to change them for other wives, even though their beauty may enchant you. Slave-girls, however are allowed to you. And God does watch over all things. (50-52)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾[53]

It will become evident from verse 50 that the explanation mentioned in this verse constitutes supplementary directives given to Muslims in Sūrah al-Nisā' to limit their wives. Before the actual supplementary directive, this verse 49 is an introductory verse in which a question is answered. It is stated that if a wife is divorced before the marriage is consummated, then she is not required to undergo the *'iddat* period. This question must have specially arisen

53. Believers! When you marry believing women and divorce them before consummating the marriage, you are not required to observe the waiting period. Thus give them well and let them go honourably.

in those times because while following the directive of limiting the wives to four, many cases of divorce must have taken place, and men must have thought that they should preferably divorce those of their wives with whom marriage had not been consummated as yet. This verse provided a very just option in this matter: such people were told that no *'iddat* period was needed for such women. They should be honourably released by giving them provisions of life. Details of such grant of provisions can be seen in verses 236-237 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The meaning of سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا was explained by this writer under these verses. I had written that if the stage of divorce reaches, then it should be done in a very graceful and magnanimous way. It should not be a source of humiliation for the parties involved.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ وَ
بَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ۡ وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ
نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۗ خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا
عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۵۰﴾[54]

It has been referred to earlier that when the directive of limiting the wives to four was revealed, the Prophet (sws) had only four wives: 'Ā'ishah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta), Sawdah (rta) and Umm Salamah (rta). It may be noted that Zaynab bint Khuzaymah (rta) had already died in 4 AH. Hence, the question of the Prophet (sws) divorcing any of his wives never arose. And hence the Hypocrites in this matter could not raise any objection. However, in 5 AH when the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), it seems the Hypocrites got the chance of raising two points in their propaganda campaign against

54. O Prophet! We have made lawful to you the wives whose dowers have been paid by you and free women whom God gives in your possession from the spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts who migrated with you and any believing woman who gifts herself to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to marry her. This directive is specifically for you alone, separate from the believers. We very well know what We have imposed on them as obligations regarding their wives and slave girls so that there be no difficulty for you and God is Forgiving and Merciful.

the Prophet (sws): they contended that the Prophet (sws) had married the wife of his adopted son and had also made a separate *sharī'ah* for his own self as all Muslims were allowed to marry up to four wives whilst there was no such restriction on him in this regard.

The details of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) have been furnished earlier. It is evident from them that the Prophet (sws) as the per the Qur'ān (33:37-38) did not desire this marriage at all; it was at God's directive that he married her. However, how could the mischief mongers accept this. Hence, they must have raised this objection. At last, the Almighty took it upon Himself to explain in detail that the Prophet (sws) had been given certain exceptions in the law of polygamy applicable to common Muslims.

The words يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ first of all relate to those wives who at the time of revelation of this verse were in his wedlock. These words state that the Almighty has made lawful for the Prophet (sws) wives whose dowers have been paid by him. Here "to make lawful" does not mean that at one time they were prohibited in some aspect and then this prohibition was lifted. This statement has in fact been given to shut the mouths of the Hypocrites and those who were raising objections: he should not care about their worthless talk. Concomitant indicators show that these verses were revealed in 5 AH. Since the start of the Makkan life till 5 AH, two of his wives Khadījah (rta) and Zaynabt bint Khuzaymah (rta) had already died, as indicated earlier. 'Ā'ishah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta), Sawdah (rta) and Umm Salamah (rta), however, were alive. And to this group the new addition of Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) was made. About all these, the verse states that they have been made lawful to the Prophet (sws). These women have been introduced by the words اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ (whose dowers you have paid) because after them are mentioned those women who were granted to him through spoils of war and it is known for such women dowers are not needed to be paid.

The words وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ refer to the fact that women who have been acquired by the Prophet (sws) as slaves from spoils of war are also lawful to him. Here the words مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ after وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ must be specially kept in consideration. It is evident from them that common slave women are not implied by them. They refer to women who are acquired through spoils of war. Among these imprisoned women, there, at times, would be women of nobility and daughters

and daughters-in-law of tribal chiefs. Treating them with special favour was a tradition that was even found in the days of *jāhiliyyah*. Islam also kept it intact. Thus such women were generally distributed among chiefs of the capturing army. Jawayriyyah (rta) and Ṣafiyyah (rta) as per this tradition were given to the Prophet (sws) in the battles of Banī Muṣtaliq and Khaybar respectively. He could have kept them as slaves but giving due consideration to their family status he liberated and then married them. This marriage was conducted under the special condition granted by the verse under discussion. If this permission had not been granted to him, he could have kept both these women as slaves but could not have married them because in this case the number of wives would have exceeded the stipulated number. This of course would have cause difficulty for him in giving due regard to certain political and moral benefits. For this reason, the Almighty gave him permission to marry such women. These marriages took place in 5 AH and 7 AH respectively. Hence by 7 AH the number of his wives reached 7.

The words وَبَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ detail out very close relatives of the Prophet (sws): if any of his paternal or maternal cousins left their relatives, family and tribe for the cause of religion and migrated with him, and to give due regard and encouragement to them on this, he could marry any of them if he wanted to. God's directive to the Prophet (sws) to marry Zaynab (rta) not only was to reform a custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period but it was also because she deserved his affection and love because being his cousin she had made sacrifices for the cause of religion.

It was on the basis of this very permission that the Prophet (sws) married Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān (rta). She was his paternal cousin. The details of her sacrifices for the cause of religion have already been cited earlier.

No marriage was conducted by the Prophet (sws) with any of his maternal cousins. However, if there had been women like Zaynab (rta) and Umm Ḥabībah (rta) among them, if needed he could have married them as per this permission.

Consider next the words: وَ امْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا. Gifting one's self to someone means that a lady forgo all her rights and consign herself to a person and feel satisfied on whatever marital rights that person gives her. This is a form of extreme sacrifice

and selflessness. It is evident from historical narratives that many women from among his companions wanted to do this merely to have the honour of being ascribed to him, and they even expressed this desire before them. Everyone knows that the personal life of the Prophet (sws) was very constrained financially. It has been described above that it was because of such financial scarcity that Hypocrite women would suggest to them that if they are able to get divorce from the Prophet (sws), prominent chiefs of the time would marry them and this life of abject poverty would be turned into a life of luxury and comfort. In the wake of this, obviously no woman could have gifted herself to the Prophet (sws) for any worldly greed. Such a sacrifice could have been made only by those women who held the Prophet (sws) in high regard and esteem and merely wanted to have the honour of serving him thereby forgoing every desire they may have. This was a very noble and pure sentiment. For this reason, the Almighty gave it due consideration and allowed the Prophet (sws) that if a believing woman wanted to gift herself to him and he too agreed, then he could marry such a lady. It is evident from the condition imposed by the words اِنۡ اَرَادَ النَّبِیُّ اَنۡ یَّسۡتَنۡکِحَهَا that although these are very commendable sentiments, the Prophet (sws) is not in a position to greatly encourage it. Hence, it has been left totally at his discretion to accept or reject such a proposal. It has already been pointed out earlier that the only proposal he accepted in this regard was that of Maymūnah (rta). This marriage took place in 7 AH at the 'Umrah al-qaḍā'. After this, the Prophet (sws) did not marry any further.

The words خَالِصَةً لَّکَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ refer to the fact that this permission to marry more than four wives is specially for the Prophet (sws); other Muslims do not have this permission.

The words قَدۡ عَلِمۡنَا مَا فَرَضۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمۡ فِیۡۤ اَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَ مَا مَلَکَتۡ اَیۡمَانُهُمۡ لِکَیۡلَا یَکُوۡنَ عَلَیۡکَ حَرَجٌ refer to verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which it was made mandatory on the Muslims to not marry more than four women. These words mean that it is in God's knowledge what He had made incumbent on the Muslims regarding their wives and slave-maidens. In spite of this, He is giving the Prophet (sws) this special permission so that he is not faced with any difficulty in this regard. In other words, he would be able to fulfill this permission to marry for religious and collective benefits referred to above without any hindrance.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): though this permission has imposed some heavy obligations on him, God is forgiving and merciful. He forgoes blemishes which take place unintentionally.

Regarding this verse, some people on the basis of certain narratives have expressed the view that it was revealed after all the marriages of the Prophet (sws), and through it he was assured that all the marriages he had undertaken were lawful. In the opinion of this writer, this view is not correct.

Firstly, how could have the Prophet (sws) married without God's permission once the directive to limit marriage to four had been revealed? It was but befitting for him to take the lead in following this directive.

Secondly, if it just needed to be said that all marriages conducted by him were lawful, then what was the need to state all these relations and types of women made lawful to him? A single sentence to the effect that all his marriages have been made lawful by God would have been enough, and no one has the right to object to them.

Nevertheless, this view is untenable. The real situation is the one which I have alluded to above. When the verse limiting marriages to four was revealed, the Prophet (sws) had only four wives. So no question of divorcing any of them arose. Later, however, when he married Zaynab (rta), this would have raised an objection in the minds of the critics, and there was a chance that the pious too may get affected with this objection. In order to circumvent this possibility, the Almighty explained in detail that it was at His own behest that this marriage had taken place, and that in this matter the law for the Prophet (sws) was different from the rest of the Muslims. The Prophet (sws) could marry further in a certain specified category of women. In this manner, God declared the lawful nature of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (rta) and also prescribed detailed regulations in this regard. In short, in this writer's opinion, this verse was revealed in 5 AH after the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (rta).

تُرْجِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُـْٔوِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنِ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ

عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا ﴿٥١﴾[55]

It has been explained earlier that all these marriages of the Prophet (sws) were conducted to achieve certain objectives in the interest of religion. For this reason, just as an exception was given to him in the number of wives, he was also given freedom in marital rights. It was thus left to his discretion which of the wives he would like to keep close to him and which not. Though the matter of justice between the wives was very significant, the Almighty gave the Prophet (sws) freedom in this matter as well, and this had two aspects:

Firstly, as alluded to earlier, in his case the real purpose for which marriages are contracted was secondary. The real purpose was to achieve certain interests of religion, and for this he was relieved of the bounds and limits that have been prescribed for a common husband and wife.

Secondly, there was no fear in his case that he would gain unwarranted benefit from this permission. Thus all biographers of the Prophet (sws) unanimously state that in spite of this freedom he continued to impose on himself the condition of justice and never ever disregarded it.

The words وَمَنِ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ refer to the fact that he had the permission to restore marital and intimate relations with a wife after severing them. In this matter, he had no restriction on him and no one among his wives would have the right to object to this.

The words ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ urge the noble wives to not regard their relationship with the Prophet (sws) to be analogous to a general husband and wife relationship. They should judge it by the real responsibility of the Prophet (sws) and their own real status. If this correct basis of the Prophet's marriages is kept in mind by them and they think that their real relationship with the Prophet (sws) is not of husband and wife but of women who want to serve the cause of religion, then neither will any mutual jealousy viz a viz their marital rights will remain between them nor will they have

---

55. You can keep any of them away from you and keep any of them near you and it is also allowed to you to bring any of them near you whom you have kept away. This is more proper so that they be contented and not be sorrowful – and feel satisfied with whatever you give all of them. And God knows what is in your hearts and God is All-Knowing and Most-Forbearing.

any complaint or grievance with the Prophet (sws). With this view in mind, they will feel content with whatever time he can make available for them. With this change of view, the more a wife will serve religion the more elevated status she will have not only in the eyes of the Prophet (sws) but also in the eyes of his other wives. This will eliminate the sting between mutual jealousies and envies.

The words وَ اللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا remind the Prophet (sws) and his wives that everyone should fully bear in mind that God is aware of all the secrets of the hearts, and in spite of this knowledge, He is forbearing and tolerant. Hence, He forgoes blemishes. By fully keeping in mind both the knowledge and forbearance of God, the true concept of His fear and forgiveness is formed in the minds. This concept creates a balance between hope and despair in a person and sets his life on the right path.

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَآءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَ لَاۤ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا ﴿۵۲﴾[56]

Apart from the categories of women mentioned above, all other types of women were forbidden to the Prophet (sws). Ibn Kathīr has cited the following opinion of *tafsīr* authorities like Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (rta), Mujāhid, ‘Ikramah, Dhahhāk, Abū Razīn, Abū Ṣāliḥ, Ḥasan, Qatādah and Suddī: وما سوى ذلك من أصناف النساء فلا يحل لك (and except for these all other categories of women are not lawful to you).[57] In other words, a special sphere of women has been specified for the Prophet (sws) beyond which he could not marry.

The words وَ لَاۤ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ state that the Prophet (sws) was not even permitted to divorce any of his wives and marry new ones in their place even though their beauty might attract him. After this, only slave-maidens were left. Thus under this permission Māriyah, the Copt came in his possession and it was from her that the Prophet (sws) had a son: Abraham.

---

56. All other women besides these are not lawful for you nor is it lawful to you to change them for other wives, even though their beauty may enchant you. Slave-girls, however are allowed to you. And God does watch over all things.

57. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 503.

It is obvious that the words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا carry a reminder and admonition and it is also obvious that their addressee is the Prophet (sws). Readers may have noticed that a similar reminder was sounded to the noble wives in the previous verse. It is evident from this that everyone is accountable before God and the higher status he has the greater is his accountability. For this reason, it is essential for everyone to continue to hold himself or herself accountable before God's accountability. Such should be the rigorous nature of this accountability that it should be fully borne in mind that every sphere of one's life is in God's knowledge.

If one reflects on the freedom and restrictions imposed on the Prophet (sws) mentioned in the afore-mentioned verses, one can see that though he has been given the freedom to marry more than four wives the restrictions that have been imposed on him viz a viz marriage and divorce are much more than the ones imposed on common Muslims.

A common Muslim is permitted to marry up to four among non-*maḥram* women and divorce any of them and bring a new wife in her place. However, the Prophet (sws) did not have this freedom. After the revelation of this directive, he could marry among only three categories of women:

i. closely-related women who had migrated with him.

ii. women who were acquired in war booty.

iii. women who wanted to gift themselves to the Prophet (sws) and he too accepted this arrangement.

The Prophet (sws) could neither marry beyond these categories nor change any of his wives merely on the basis of like or dislike. This permission was given to him to achieve certain interests of religion, as explained earlier.

Section VI: Verses (53-62)

In the succeeding verses, to counter the conspiracies and harms of the Hypocrites, certain directives are given to the noble wives as well as to common Muslim women regarding their dress code (*pardah*). Some other directives have already been given in Sūrah al-Nūr. These directives have been brought to a completion here so that the mischief-mongers and miscreants are left with no space to create desist from their pranks, then such directives will be issued regarding them that it

will not even be possible for them to hide themselves in the land. Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ
فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ وَ
اللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ
قُلُوْبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
عَظِيْمًا ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا شَيْـًٔا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ
اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ وَ
اتَّقِيْنَ اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَ
اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوْا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوْا بُهْتَانًا وَّ
اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ
ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥٩﴾ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ
مَّرَضٌ وَّالْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٠﴾ مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ اَيْنَمَا
ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا ﴿٦١﴾ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾

Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal – without waiting for the preparation of the meal. But when you are called, enter; and when you have eaten, disperse and do not sit and chat about. These things were a cause of disturbance for the Prophet but he would be considerate to you; And God is not considerate to anyone in expressing the truth. And if you ask his wives for anything, ask them from behind a curtain. This way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him; These are all grave things in the sight of God. Whether you reveal anything or conceal it, God is aware of everything. (53-54)

It shall be no offence for the Prophet's wives regarding their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters'

sons, their women of acquaintance, or their slave-girls. Women! Have fear of God. God is aware of everything. (55)

Indeed, God and His angels send their mercy to the Prophet. Believers! You too send your blessings to him. Indeed those who torment God and His Messenger are cursed by God in this life and that to come, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment. And those who torment believing men and believing women for what they never did shall bear the guilt of slander and a grievous sin. (58)

O Prophet! Ask your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks over them. This is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested. And God is Ever-Forgiving and Merciful. (59)

If these Hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts and the scandal mongers of Madīnah do not desist, We will incite you against them. Then they will seldom get a chance to live with you. Cursed shall they be. Wherever they are seized, they shall be slain mercilessly. Such has been the practice of God about those who have gone before them. And you shall find no change in the practice of God. (60-62)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ ۫ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمًا ﴿۵۳﴾[58]

58. Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal – without waiting for the preparation of the meal. But when you are called, enter; and when you have eaten, disperse and do not sit and chat about. These things were a cause of disturbance for the Prophet but he would be considerate to you; And God is not considerate to anyone in expressing the truth. And if you ask his wives for anything, ask them from behind a curtain. This way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him; These are all grave things in the sight of God.

The necessary etiquette that Muslims must follow when they visit one another has already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr. Here, this etiquette is explained with reference to the houses of the Prophet (sws), and this further explanation was the consequence of the attitude of the Hypocrites which is discussed in this *sūrah*.

Due to various reasons, the Prophet (sws) from time to time would invite his companions for food. Because of his gracious nature and civility, on such occasions he would even invite people who were afflicted with the ailment of hypocrisy. Some would join such banquets even without invitation. Such people would exploit the gracious manners of the Prophet (sws). In the first place, these people feigning that they have been invited, would come much before time and sit there for long periods. Then even after having food they would not budge and would engage in long conversations. A further prank they would indulge in would be that they would suddenly barge into the abodes of the noble wives on the excuse that they wanted something from them. The purpose of all these activities would be what I have already alluded to earlier: they wanted an opening to instill evil suggestions into their hearts. The Prophet (sws) would not like these activities and would also feel uncomfortable. However, out of courtesy, he would overlook them. Yet there is a limit to overlooking something. When it became evident that these people did not deserve courtesy, the Almighty revealed very explicit directives and also warned that if they now do not change their ways, they will be calling for the fate destined for them.

Though the address in يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ is general so that the teachings these words carry are deemed to be for all, yet concealed in this address are the Hypocrites to which we have alluded earlier. On this occasion, the Almighty too did not want to lift the veil from them and used general words of address. The words mean: “Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal.” There are two things concealed in the style: يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ : firstly, people should not enter without permission, and secondly, they should not come to a banquet without being invited. The words غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ state the third condition. The words نٰظِرِيْنَ and اِنٰى mean “those who wait” and “the time needed to prepare something or to cook food” respectively. In other words, it is also not allowed to them that

if somehow they have managed to come for the banquet, then they should come before time and wait for the time for it to be served. In the first place, this shows that a person is greedy and mean, and in the second, in those times, houses did not have the facility to have separate sections for men and women; same was the case with the Prophet's house. Hence, it would be very bothersome for the house inhabitants if people would come before time.

The words وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ state the right decorum in this regard: people should come only when they are called and once they have had food they should disperse and should not sit there chatting about. The words اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ explain what is implicitly found in the words يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ. In other words, they should only go when they are called and never go uninvited. The directive وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ is very similar to the one given in غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ. So, just as this is undesirable that people should go there and wait while the food is being cooked, it is equally undesirable to stay back and engage in conversation once they have eaten the food.

The pronoun ذٰلِكُمْ in اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِىَّ فَيَسْتَحْىٖ مِنْكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْىٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ points to all the things mentioned earlier. It is said that all these things were a cause of bother and discomfort for the Prophet (sws), but he did not stop them because he was courteous and considerate to them. However, God does not show courtesy and consideration in the matter of the truth. Hence, He is now informing them. It may be noted here that God has not mentioned here any weakness of the Prophet (sws). He has in fact mentioned a very desirable trait of his: he is very courteous and polite. For this reason, the Almighty warned people of their blemishes and it became essential for the Prophet (sws) also to declare them by disregarding any more courtesy.

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ is the wives of the Prophet (sws). The expression بُيُوْتَ النَّبِىِّ (houses of the Prophet) has already occurred earlier. Hence a very clear indication of the wives can be gauged from the context. These words mean that if a person needs something he should not barge into the presence of the Prophet's wives. He should ask for his need from behind a curtain.

The words are ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ (this way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts.) are meant to negate a notion that may arise in the minds. The implication is that apparently it seems a much

unneeded thing that if a person wants to ask for a glass of water from them, then even for such a trivial task he must ask them from behind a curtain. However, it should not be regarded as a triviality; it is something very important to protect the heart. The Almighty is fully aware of the person whose heart He has made. He knows the hidden pathways from where it accepts negative influences, and it is the heart on which depends the moral health of a person. It is thus essential for people who want to keep their heart healthy to protect it from things that can contaminate it. People of today who claim to be cultured and well-mannered show a lot of diligence in keeping their clothes clean; they would not like the slightest speck of dust settle on them or the smallest of wrinkles that may make them untidy. However, they not the slightest care about the filth with which their hearts may be contaminanted with. This is because moral and spiritual health has no importance before them. The fact is that it is this health which occupies real significance. The Prophet (sws) has directed our attention to this fact by the words: وَاِنَّ فِی الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً اِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ کُلُّهُ وَاِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ کُلُّهُ اَلَا وَهِیَ الْقَلْبُ (There is a chunk of meat in a person's body; if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy; if it is inflicted with some disorder, the whole body is inflicted with disorder. Listen up! [This chunk of meat] is the heart).[59] The more delicate and valuable an organ in a body is, the more it needs to be looked after. The heart is the most valuable and the most sensitive organ in a human body. For this reason, the Almighty has made the most arrangements to protect it.

The words: وَمَا کَانَ لَکُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْکِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا state that it is not worthy of people to torment God and the Prophet (sws) with things mentioned earlier nor is it lawful to them to marry any of the Prophet's wives.

This part of the verse has finally lifted the veil from the face of the people who were actually being addressed. Obviously, it was the Hypocrites who would indulge in such mischief to torment the Prophet (sws), and it was they who fancied marrying his wives so that this could become a means to further create mischief and propaganda against God and His Messenger. The style of this verse harbours admonition in it. That is why Muḥammad (sws) is

59. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1219, (no. 1599).

mentioned as رسول اللّٰہِ God's Messenger where as in the previous verses he was repeatedly addressed as a نبی (Prophet). The purpose is to emphasize the admonition. This is because a Messenger sets up God's court of justice in this very world, as has been repeatedly referred to in this *tafsīr*. When he comes, he does not merely preach and propagate his message: he comes to decide the fate of the pious and the wicked of his nation. Hence, making fun of him or tormenting him must not be taken lightly. The implication is that those who are playing this game are actually playing with fire. They must keep this fate of theirs in their minds.

The words: وَلَآ اَنۡ تَنۡكِحُوۡٓا اَزۡوَاجَهٗ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖۤ اَبَدًا strike a final blow on the desire of marrying the wives of the Prophet (sws) which these people harboured in their hearts. It is stated that it is not lawful for them to marry his wives today or any time later. It has already been mentioned in verse 6 earlier that the wives of the Prophet (sws) are like mothers of the believers. It is only this relationship which is natural and logical for them. It is natural because every believer (if he has any semblance of faith in him) regards them with much more respect and honour than even his own mother. In the light of this if a believer even thinks of marrying them, it is worse and more shameful than thinking of marrying his own mother. If he even thinks of marrying them, then it means that his faith has serious shortcomings and his nature has become perverted.

It is logical because the status of the wives of the Prophet (sws) as has been mentioned earlier in verse 34 is that they are the teachers of every man and woman of this *ummah*, and the Almighty Himself has accorded this status to them. It is the consequence of this status that they be regarded as mothers. It is only by remaining in this position that they can discharge this responsibility imposed on them by God. If they are divested of this status, then neither can they maintain their true dignity nor can others learn from them the way they should learn from them as teachers of this *ummah*.

The words اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمۡ كَانَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيۡمًا express a severe admonition. They state that all these things are very grave in the sight of God. Here their grievous consequence is not described. The threat which is concealed in this ambiguity does not need any words for expression.

اِنۡ تُبۡدُوۡا شَيۡـئًا اَوۡ تُخۡفُوۡهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمًا ﴿۵۴﴾[60]

This verse expresses another threat which adds emphasis to the earlier one. The implication is that since God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts, nothing can be hidden from Him. They can present beautiful excuses for the most evil deeds they do in this world, but these excuses will have no weight before the Almighty. He will reveal all the evil intentions of the hearts as well.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡهِنَّ فِىۡۤ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اِخۡوَانِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآءِ اِخۡوَانِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآءِ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُهُنَّ‌ۚ وَاتَّقِيۡنَ اللّٰهَ‌ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدًا ﴿۵۵﴾[61]

This verse has the same occasion as that of وَلَا يُبۡدِيۡنَ زِيۡنَتَهُنَّ in Sūrah al-Nūr. Most words of these two verses are common as well. This verse enumerates the list of people who were an exception to the restrictions which had been imposed in the earlier verse regarding people entering the houses of the Prophet's wives. Special and important relationships are mentioned and the purpose is that all people subsumed under them are an exception to this restriction. The only restrictions they must abide by are the ones mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr.

The words وَاتَّقِيۡنَ اللّٰهَ‌ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدًا in the end warn the wives of the Prophet (sws) the way others have been warned earlier. The implication is that these directives must not be followed in a minimal fashion. They must be followed in letter and spirit with piety and fear of God. And it must always be kept in mind that God is present everywhere. There is no place where a person can hide from Him.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوۡنَ عَلَى النَّبِىِّ‌ؕ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا صَلُّوۡا عَلَيۡهِ وَسَلِّمُوۡا تَسۡلِيۡمًا ﴿۵۶﴾[62]

This verse directs Muslims to adopt the behavior they must adopt

60. Whether you reveal anything or conceal it, God is aware of everything.

61. It shall be no offence for the Prophet's wives regarding their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women of acquaintance, or their slave-girls. Women! Have fear of God. God is aware of everything.

62. Indeed, God and His angels sending their mercy to the Prophet. Believers! You too send your blessings to him.

instead of tormenting and harassing the Prophet (sws). It is stated that God sends mercy to his Prophet (sws) and his angels also pray for mercy for him. Thus the correct behaviour in this regard for the believers is that they also in unison with the angels send blessings and salutations to the Prophet instead of scheming to torment him.

A number of facts which become evident from this verse should remain in consideration.

Firstly, it is a pity if some people among human beings try to torment the Prophet (sws) whose status before God and His angels is such that God sends His mercies to him and the angels pray for mercy for him. The fact is that the real favour of the Prophet (sws) is with human beings and not God and His angels.

Secondly, those who send blessings and salutations to the Prophet (sws) are not doing a favour to him. They are merely adding their voice to the voice of the angels and thereby becoming eligible of mercy. As far as the Prophet (sws) himself is concerned, he does not need the supplications and prayers of others in the presence of the mercy of God and the supplications and prayers of the angels.

Thirdly, sending mercies and blessings to the Prophet (sws) is a remedy for the ailment of hypocrisy. The reason is that here the occasion on which this statement has been given is that instead of tormenting the Prophet (sws) like the Hypocrites, the believers should send blessings to the Prophet (sws). It is clearly evident from this that hypocrisy does not enter the hearts of those who are diligent in sending blessings to the Prophet (sws).

Fourthly, the objective is that abundant blessings be sent to the Prophet (sws). The occasion and context as well as the words of the verse necessitate this. This is because the verbal noun in وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا denotes emphasis and multiplicity. For this reason, I do not regard the opinion of those jurists as correct who say that if a person only sends blessings to the Prophet (sws) once in his life, then he would have followed the purport of this verse.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۵۷﴾[63]

63. Indeed those who torment God and His Messenger are cursed by God in this life and that to come, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.

This verse mentions the fate of the people who were guilty of tormenting God's Messenger and showing disrespect to him. It is stated that tormenting the Prophet (sws) is like tormenting God. A messenger is someone dear to God and is His envoy. God and His angels send their mercy and blessings to him; those who do not so will necessarily be considered as those who oppose God and His angels and torment them. God's curse will be on them in this world and the next as a punishment of this behaviour. They shall be humiliated and disgraced in this world and in the Hereafter too a grievous penalty awaits them. It may specially be noted here that they have been threatened of a worldly punishment before they face the next-worldly punishment. This is a reference to the established practice of God regarding His messengers which has been stated earlier. Further ahead, verses 60-61 also explain it. It is exactly the same punishment which was given to the Jews, and their crime was also that they tried to torment and harm the messengers of God. A further explanation of this can be seen in the explanation of Sūrah al-Ṣaff.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوْا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوْا بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۵۸﴾[64]

The previous verses mention the attitude the Hypocrites had specifically adopted towards the Prophet (sws). This verse now alludes to their pranks and mischief they were working against believing men and women to make them blameworthy. I have dealt with in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Nūr that what weighed down heavily on the Hypocrites was that amongst all other religious denominations, Muslims were regarded as morally superior – a factor that was largely responsible for their wide-scale recognition. Out of frenzied jealousy, the antidote they invented for this was to defame believing men and women so that they are brought in moral disrepute. This evil-doing would satisfy their venom. The details of the incident of *ifk* have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr. That mischief too was worked keeping this objective in mind. Here the Almighty has referred to this evil-doing and stated that those who are implicating believing men and women through false blames are

64. And those who torment believing men and believing women for what they never did shall bear the guilt of slander and a grievous sin.

guilty of absolute slander and open sin. The implication is that if they do not desist from this attitude of theirs, they will face its consequences.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ وَ بَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۵۹﴾[65]

To secure the wives of the Prophet (sws) and Muslim women from the evil-doing of these Hypocrites and mischief mongers, they have been directed to pull over a part of their cloaks on their faces. This would create a distinction between them and non-Muslim women and slave-maidens and no one would be afforded with an excuse to tease them.

Readers my remember that in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Nūr it was directed that when relatives pay a visit, women of the house should put on a modest behaviour and not display their embellishments and should draw their coverings over their bosoms: وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّ (٢٤: ٣١). Here they are directed to draw large cloaks over themselves that drops over their faces. This is an obvious indication of the fact that this directive relates to the situation when women need to go out of their houses. One of the reasons that makes it an indication for this inference is that the reason for this directive is: ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ (this is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested). Obviously this can only be related to outside-the-house situations. The second reason for this is that the word جلباب (*jilbāb*) is used and not خمار (*khimār*). The word جلباب is explained by lexicographers thus: هو الرداء فوق الخمار (*jilbāb* refers to the large cloak that it worn over the *khimār*). Obviously, the need to wear large cloaks cannot arise inside the homes. The nobility among Arab women would wear them when they would go out of their houses. It is evident from classical Arabic poetry that *jilbāb* was commonly worn by Arab women belonging to the nobility when they would go out of their houses. The following couplet of a poetess belonging to

---

65. O Prophet! Ask your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks over them. This is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested. And God is Ever-Forgiving and Merciful.

the tribe of Hudhayl is sufficient to prove our claim. In a elegy of one the slain people of her tribe, she writes:

تمشی السنور إليه وهی لاهية

مشی العذاری عليهن الجلابيب

(The cat would gleefully walk towards it like the walk of umarried girls who wear cloaks.)

This is not the occasion to discuss the unique simile found in this couplet. Readers must however keep in mind that in the *jāhiliyyah* period there did not just exist women who would go out while being heavily embellished, but also found in that society were women belonging to the nobility who would wear large cloaks over their coverings when they would go out. The Qur'ān has directed Muslim women to draw part of their *jilbābs* over them so that the face is also fully covered. It is this *jilbāb* which is still in vogue amongst our elderly decent women who live in villages and it is this which has now assumed the shape of a *burqa'* with the passage of time in consonance with development in fashion. If the proponents of civilization and culture of today regard this *burqa'* to be against civilization and culture, then let them do so; the Qur'ān, however, contains a very clear directive in its favour. Only those people can negate this directive who claim to be more cultured than God and His Messenger.

The words ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ prescribe a distinctive sign for Muslim women so that wherever they go every person can recognize them from afar that these are Muslim women and do not dare tease them. And if he does, then he must fully realize the consequences. In those times, there existed in Madīnah non-Muslim women as well who were not bound by any restrictions of dress and intermingling. Moreover, slave-maidens were also present whose social and moral status was low. For this reason, miscreants had many opportunities to tease them. If while walking they would pass a sarcastic remark on a Muslim woman and would be called to account for this, they would reply by saying that they reckoned that they were speaking to slave-maiden of a certain person and that they wanted to ask a certain question from her. After this mark of distinction was prescribed for

Muslim women, such excuses were done away with.

No one should be misled by these words that it was a temporary measure that was adopted to secure Muslim women from the mischief of miscreants and it is no longer needed. Firstly, all directives have a cause and it does not mean that if that cause ceases to exist the directives will become null and void. Secondly, can a sane person claim that today's circumstanes are not a thousand times worse than those of that period? Moreover, today's society has become totally devoid of the concepts of modesty and chastity taught by the Qur'ān.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا are meant to create ease in the directive. It means that women must try their best to observe this caution. If in spite of this caution they make a mistake, then God is Forgiving and Ever Merciful.

لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّ الْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۶۰﴾ مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ ۚ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا ﴿۶۱﴾[66]

These verses threaten the miscreants and the Hypocrites that if these people do not abstain from their mischief, then the attitude of forgoing their blemishes will change. The Prophet (sws) is directly addressed and told that he will be directed to hold them accountable on every such occasion. Then they will find very little opportunity to live in this city. After this whatever time they will spend in it, they will remain accursed. They shall be seized at every step. They shall be caught and executed in an exemplary manner.

The word مَّرَضٌ in وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ refers to jealousy, envy and malice. This faction of the Hypocrites was not only afflicted with weak intent and will, it had great jealousy for the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. However, unlike the disbelievers, due to cowardice they tried to harm the cause of Islam and Muslims by infiltrating in their ranks.

The words وَّ الْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ refer to the faction of the Hypocrites

66. If these Hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts and the scandal mongers of Madīnah do not desist, We will incite you against them. Then they will seldom get a chance to live with you. Cursed shall they be. Wherever they are seized, they shall be slain mercilessly.

that was very adept in spreading propaganda, hearsay and disinformation. The purpose was to create discouragement and dismay among the Muslims and to disparage their moral repute. A very prominent example of this behaviour on their part can be seen in the incidents of the battle of Aḥzāb and of the marriage between Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta). In lexicons, the word ارجاف means to spread the propaganda of negative and mischievous news to create discord and discontent among people. It is evident that such propaganda specialists do not merely exist in current times; their pundits were also found in earlier times.

The linguistic meaning of لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ is "We would incite and stir you up against them." The implication is that till then, the Almighty had directed the Prophet (sws) to ignore and forgive them; however, instead of giving due regard to this, they are becoming audacious day by day. If they do not desist from this prank of theirs, God will order to seize them after which they will seldom get the chance to continue to live in Madīnah. In the first place, they will not be able to live in this city. And if they would be able to do so, then it will be with God's curse and damnation. The words اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا depict this state of theirs. Thus, in later times, it was this very fate which the Hypocrites met. Those among them who did not mend their ways ended up with the same fate as that of the miscreants of the Quraysh and the Jews. Details have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah.

سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾[67]

This verse is precisely of the same style as verse 28 earlier. The implication is that the Almighty dealt with the Hypocrites and the disbelievers of the past who opposed prophets of God in this way. So, this established practice of God must be kept in mind by the Prophet (sws). He will deal with his enemies in the same way. God's practice never changes.

---

67. Such has been the practice of God about those who have gone before them. And you shall find no change in the practice of God.

Section VI: Verses (63-73)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. They first sound a reminder of the Day of Judgement. The addressees are told that if merely because the Prophet (sws) is unable to disclose its time of arrival or unable to make people behold it on their request they regard it to be a bluff, then this means that they are not far-sighted. Though its time of arrival is known to God only, it is certain to come. On that day, no one will be able to support or intercede for anyone. On the contrary, each person will himself or herself be responsible for his or her deeds and responsibilities. On that day, the excuse of people that they followed their leaders and it is they who led them astray shall not be acceptable.

After this Muslims, especially the Hypocrites are warned that they should not resort to tormenting and distressing the Messenger as done by the Jews in the case of Moses (sws). If they do so they will meet the same fate as the Jews: the Almighty absolved Moses (sws) of every blame and inflicted his opponents with an eternal curse. The right attitude Muslims should adopt – which will guarantee their success both in this world and in the next – is to listen and obey their Prophet (sws).

At the end, man is warned that the Almighty has blessed him with a great status: He entrusted him with something of which only he was worthy of in the heavens and the earth. His glory depends on discharging the rights of this trust granted to him. If he does so, he is worthy of being prostrated to by the angels. If he does recognize this responsibility, then he is worthy of being thrown into the deepest depths of error. The essential consequence of this trust is that one day he be held accountable for it. Those who violated it should be punished and those who gave it due regard be rewarded. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

يَسْئَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۚ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٦٥﴾ يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ
وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِى النَّارِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَ
كُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّوْنَا السَّبِيْلَا ﴿٦٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ

اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا
اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ
فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧١﴾ اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَاَشْفَقْنَ
مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿٧٢﴾ لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَ
الْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

People ask you about the Hour of Doom. Say: "Only God has knowledge of it. And what do you know, the Hour may well be near at hand." (63)

Indeed, God has laid His curse upon the disbelievers and has prepared for them the punishment of the Fire in which they will abide forever. There they shall find neither any protector nor helper. On the day when their heads will be rotated and turned about in the Fire. They will say: "Would that we had obeyed God and obeyed His Messenger!" And will say: "Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and our chiefs, but they led us astray. Our Lord: "Doubly punish them and heavily curse them." (64-68)

Believers! Be not like those who tormented Moses. So, God absolved him from their blames and He stood honourable in the sight of God. Believers! Fear God and speak the truth. God will set right your deeds and forgive your sins. And those who will continue to obey God and His Messenger have attained great success. (69-71)

We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it and man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is unjust and one who is overcome by emotions. So that God punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, both men and women; and shower His mercy on believing men and women. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (72-73)

Explanation

يَسْـَٔلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٦٣﴾[68]

The verse states that when these miscreants and mischief-mongers are threatened of the Hereafter, they make fun of it. They would say

68. People ask you about the Hour of Doom. Say: "Only God has knowledge of it. And what do you know, the Hour may well be near at hand."

that they have been hearing this threat for a long time; it has not materialized nor it ever will; if it is to come, then why does it not come; what is the time of its arrival? In other words, they would imply that this is just a bluff which has no basis and that they will not be affected by such bluffs.

The words قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ask the Prophet (sws) to tell them that only God knows its time of arrival; only He knows this secret of the universe; neither the Prophet (sws) himself has any knowledge of it nor any other person; however, it is certain to come, as is being informed to them; if he cannot tell them about its exact time of arrival, then this cannot negate its arrival. At another place in the Qur'ān it is asserted that denying something simply because its time of arrival is not known is foolish logic. The Hereafter aside, there are so many common realities of our life which no sane person denies even if their time is not known. The sphere of man's knowledge is very limited. He does not know every thing. The world around man and that within him as well as his intellect and nature bear testimony to the Hereafter. So, making fun of it merely because its time is not known is idiocy and self-deception.

The style found in وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا expresses the exaltedness, importance and dreadful nature of something. This is an answer to the sarcasm and disdain found in the question raised by the opponents: they make fun of people merely because these people are not able to tell them the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement – what may they know? It may be near at hand.

This answer also shows that it will soon manifest itself. These words actually sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and severely reprimand those who make fun of the Day of Judgement. It needs to be kept in mind that since Muḥammad (sws) is the last Prophet, after him only one phase remains for the worldly court: the Day of Judgement. Details are forthcoming at appropriate places of this book.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۚ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٦٥﴾[69]

69. Indeed, God has laid His curse upon the disbelievers and has prepared for them the punishment of the Fire in which they will abide forever. There they shall find neither any protector nor helper.

The warning concealed in the above verse is brought to the surface in this one: people who are today denying the Day of Judgement should listen carefully: God has smacked His curse on them, and has prepared for them the torment of Hell in which they will stay forever and no one will help or protect them there. Neither the partners they ascribe to God, nor will their intercessors they trust be of any avail to them. Moreover, their own comrades and supporters will not be able to help them.

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا ﴿٦٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٨﴾[70]

The word تَقْلِيبٌ means to turn over and rotate. When meat is cooked on fire it is rotated from one side to another. The verse states that these people are going to meet this very fate. They will be dragged faceward into Hell in such a way that their face will be roasted from both sides. The face is specially mentioned because it is the most prominent manifestation of arrogance when a person haughtily evades the truth. When the face is to meet this fate then the rest of the limbs too will meet no different a fate. The verse states that they would express their yearning of obeying God and His Messenger and of not being lured into deception by their leaders once they see Day of Judgement they are today making fun of. On that day, they will openly blame their leaders and elders for their own error. They would express their despair on submitting to them and thereby being led astray. They will request God to give them double the punishment of their own since these leaders were the reason of their own misguidance and to smack a greater curse on them. Here their request is only cited. The Almighty's response to it has already been stated in verse 38 of Sūrah al-A'rāf as: لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ ie., it shall be double both for them and for their leaders. This has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

---

70. On the day when their heads will be rotated and turned about in the Fire. They will say: "Would that we had obeyed God and obeyed His Messenger!" And will say: "Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and our chiefs, but they led us astray. Our Lord: "Doubly punish them and heavily curse them."

Two words: سَادَتَنَا and كُبَرَآءَنَا occur here. The first of these obviously refers to chiefs and the second refers to their religious and family leaders. It is not permissible to blindly follow any of them. God has granted every person the faculty to discern good from evil. It is thus the obligation of every individual to use it. If he trips at times while using it, God, hopefully, will support him and forgive him. However, a person who blindly consigns his reins to others will meet the fate described by this verse.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا ﴿۶۹﴾[71]

The topic of the Day of Judgement arose during the discourse as an admonition. Prior to that the attitude of Hypocrite men and women who were spiritually tormenting the Prophet (sws) was being discussed. They were harassing him through conspiracies and by casting aspersions on him. After this admonition, the previous topic is taken up again. Muslims are now warned that they must not follow the footsteps of the Jews who tormented Moses (sws) through accusations, objections and conspiracies. However, God absolved him from every accusation and calumny and it was with great honour that he spent his life and was given death. On the other hand, those who tormented and harassed him were humiliated in the Herein and the Hereafter. Though the words of address used are general, yet they are directed at the Hypocrites.

The torture through which the Israelites put Moses (sws) is mentioned in the Qur'ān through his own tongue thus:

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ (٦١: ٥)

And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people:"O People of My Nation! Why do you torment me even though you know very well that I have come to you as a messenger of God?" (61:5)

It is mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy that when Moses (sws) roused the Israelites to attack Palestine and they showed cowardice as per their tradition, Moses (sws) reprimanded them in the following

71. Believers! Be not like those who tormented Moses. So, God absolved him from their blames and He stood honourable in the sight of God.

words:

> Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. (Deuteronomy, 9:7)

It is repeatedly mentioned in the Torah that whenever the Israelites were faced with a trial, they would blame Moses (sws) and start reproaching him. Alluded to below are some examples in this regard.

When the Israelites met with tribulations in Egypt after Moses (sws) began his preaching, they regarded him to be their cause. They said that it was because of him that they were inflicted with trials before his birth and still face them after his birth.

When Moses (sws) led them out of Egypt and the Egyptians chased them, the whole nation started to complain and blame Moses for their destruction in a desolate place.

After crossing the river, when Moses (sws) went to the mount of Ṭūr to receive the Torah, they said that they have been forsaken by him and that he will not return. They then had a calf carved out by Samurai and began worshipping it.

Korah instituted a party and spread the propaganda that a single person (Moses) has the monopoly of knowing religion and become the leader of people whereas all are equal in the sight of God. This person has no distinction over them.

While living in the desert, when they had to face hardships in acquiring food, they started to openly reproach Moses (sws). They said that was Egypt even devoid of graveyards that this person has brought them out to let them die in a desert.

When arrangements had been made to provide them with food through *mann* and *salwā* and water through twelve springs, they started to brood and complain that *mann* and *salwā* are not nourishing enough and that they remember the cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions of Egypt.

When Moses (sws) roused them to attack Palestine, they replied to him that he wants to have them decimated at the hands of its powerful and mighty inhabitants. So they contended that they were not prepared for this. Moses (sws) and his Lord should go there to fight while they will stay put.

The touching and painful words with which Moses (sws) has repeatedly expressed his sorrow in the Torah on this attitude of the Israelites show the torment he had to suffer at the hands of his people. The Qur'ān, while referring to these anguishes inflicted by the Israelites, has counseled Muslims to not behave similarly with their own messenger the way the Jews did with Moses (sws). If they do this, they will meet the same fate as they met.

The words فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا state that ultimately the Almighty absolved Moses (sws) from all blames. His righteousness and sincerity were evident against all blames and slanders cast on him and his enemies were humiliated. He was regarded by God to be noble, honourable and successful. His majesty shone in this world and it will also shine in the next one. These are indirect tidings for the Prophet (sws).

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿۷۰﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۷۱﴾[72]

After directing the Muslims to abstain from the attitude adopted by the Jews, now the right attitude they should adopt is delineated. This attitude is a requisite of faith in God and His Messenger. The verse states that they should fear God. In other words, they should not be among those who torment God and His Messenger. He seizes criminals after a time and when He does so no one can escape His grasp nor can anyone liberate anyone from His clutches.

The words وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا state that if Muslims lay claim to faith, they should say what is the direct consequence of this faith. This is a reference to the acknowledgement of سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed). This acknowledgement substantiates faith and opens the way for further guidance. Also found in it is a subtle sarcasm on the statement of the Jews: سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا (we listened and we disobeyed). In other words, the statement of Jews was totally the opposite. They laid claim to faith but their words were contrary to this claim. Muslims are therefore directed that if they want to adhere to faith with

72. Believers! Fear God and speak the truth. God will set right your deeds and forgive your sins. And those who will continue to obey God and His Messenger have attained great success.

righteousness, then their motto should be: سَمِعْنَا و اَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed).

The words يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ express the consequence of speaking straight. If people resolve the contradiction between their words and deeds, God will make their deeds bear fruit and earn them blessings and make them take very step in the right direction. In this situation, if they commit any mistake, it will be forgiven by God. People who want to adopt the right path are not cosigned by the Almighty to Satan.

The words وَ مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا on the principle of gradual progression of the discourse has made it evident that the words قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا actually imply: سَمِعْنَا و اَطَعْنَا. It is stated that people who after pledging the covenant of "to listen and obey" show obedience to God and His Messenger at every step, attain great success. The implication is that this is not a deal that runs in a loss. It is, on the contrary, the key to an everlasting kingdom. So let those who want to be victorious try out his mettle.

اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ الْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَ اَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَ حَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿۷۲﴾ لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَ الْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَ يَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۷۳﴾[73]

Here the real nobility in the status of man is delineated: he is entrusted with the promise of obeying God. This promise is based on the freedom to exercise one's will and intention. Hence it is only human beings who are entitled to this promise. The reason is that only that person is entitled to this promise who has the freedom to exercise his will and intention. The question of a promise does not arise with creations which do not have this freedom. This promise was taken by the Almighty from all the progeny of Adam (sws), and it is this promise which is the foundation of the status of *khilāfah*

73. We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it and man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is unjust and one who is overcome by emotions. So that God punish the Hypocrites and the idolaters, both men and women; and shower His mercy on believing men and women. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

man and his progeny enjoy on earth. It is to manifest the consequences of this *khilāfah* that God promised Adam (sws) to bestow His guidance, book and *sharī'ah* on him. At the same time, the Almighty also warned him that those who follow His guidance will deserve a place in Paradise, and those who disobey it will be cast into Hell. In order to fulfill this promise, the Almighty sent His prophets and messengers who revived this promise of obedience and worship to the Almighty with their respective nations and peoples, and also informed them of the consequences of breaking it.

Since this promise is based on the freedom of exercising one's will, it is like a double-edged sword. If a person fulfills the promise of serving the Almighty while exercising his freedom, then no one is of higher status than him in the eyes of God. On the contrary, if he does not do so, then this would mean that he has made the greatest means of respect for him to be his greatest humiliation.

Every promise is a trust and it is the essential consequence of every trust that the being who has given this trust hold the trustee accountable whether he fulfilled his obligation towards it or not. This necessitates a day of reward and punishment. Thus the Almighty will gather everyone one day and after reviewing the register of their accounts decide who are the disbelievers and Hypocrites thereby deserving Hell and who are the believers and sincere thereby deserving Paradise.

It is evident from the words اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَاَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا that the Almighty presented this trust of obeying God through free will before the heavens, the earth and the mountains but they feared it and tendered their excuse from bearing this trust. This excuse put forth by the heavens and the earth can be through their state and can also be verbal. God understands both these types of conversation of His creation. It is explicitly stated in the Qur'ān that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty but this glorification is understood by God only. No one else does.

Similarly, to bear each responsibility, a specific ability is needed. In the absence of that ability that particular responsibility cannot be borne. Not every piece of land is conducive to cultivation. At times, an ordinary piece of land entrusted with seeds not only protects them but also nourishes and nurtures them. However, a seed cannot be nourished in a sea, a mountain or a desert. It will go waste.

This also is a fact that if a thing does not have the ability to accept another thing, it will surely evade it. For example, our eyes do not have the ability to bear light beyond a certain intensity. They will become dazed in such a case. In a similar manner, our body can only bear heat and cold to a certain degree. If this degree is exceeded, not only will our body evade them, it will also fear it. Our stomach also has the ability to digest only certain types of edibles. If we try to eat something other than these, our stomach will not be able to digest them even though they may be very expensive. Similar is the case of the heavens and the earth and the mountains in the case of this trust (*amānah*). They did not have the capacity to bear it; so, they refused to do so.

The words وَحَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ point to the rank and status of man: what the heavens and the earth, seas and mountains could not bear was borne by him. It is evident from this that though man is a very trivial creation of this universe with respect to his material substance; however, with respect to his abilities and potentials, he is higher than the heavens, wider than the earth and stronger and loftier than the mountains. It is for this reason that every object of this world has been made subservient to it but he is subservient to none except God. If he does become subservient to another being, then this is a matter of shame for him.

The words اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا refer to the ability of man that entitled him to bear this trust (*amānah*): the existence of contrary motives in him was necessary so that he could be tried and tested. This would show how he would abide by the promise of remaining obedient to God in the presence of contradictory motives and emotions and how is he able to fulfill its obligations. Thus he is made ظَلُوْم (*ẓalūm*) and جَهُوْل (*jahūl*). *Ẓalūm* is a person who is unjust in spite of being fully aware of justice and the truth. Similarly, *juhūl* is a person who in spite of having the traits of knowledge and forbearance is often overcome by ignorance and frenzy. This tussle is the real test of a person and it is this tussle on which rests his noble status. If in spite of having the freedom to succumb to injustice, a person diligently adheres to justice merely to please the Almighty, and if he also has the liberty to be lured away by his base desires, he controls his desires merely to please the Almighty, then undoubtedly his status is above the angels. This is because the latter do not have to face this tussle in

worshipping the Almighty. Their path is free from any pitfalls and they are not aware of the emotions of *ẓulm* and *jahl*. On the other hand, if a human being worships his Lord, then he has to fight with his base desires and with Satan at every step. For this reason, his worship is superior to the worship of the angels. By analogy, just as a human being on the basis of this freedom to exercise his will can reach the summit, he can also fall into the lowest pit if he misuses this freedom. It is to this reality that the following verse of Sūrah al-Tīn points:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ (٩٥: ٤-٦)

And We have created man in the finest of moulds. Then, We reverted him to the lowest except those, who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. (95:4-6)

The words لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا state the result of this trust being anded over to mankind: its necessary consequence is that a day come when people be held accountable regarding this trust – whether they fulfilled their obligation towards it or not. As a consequence, those – whether men or women – who adopted hypocrisy or committed polytheism be punished for being dishonest and breaking their covenant, and those – whether men or women – who fulfilled their obligation towards it while being steadfast on faith become worthy of their Lord's mercy.

It has been explained at another place that when the preposition على occurs with the word توبه (*tawbah*), then the meaning of mercy is also incorporated in it. For this reason, these are glad tidings for the believers that though this responsibility is very heavy, yet God is Forgiving and Merciful. He has left the doors of repentance (*tawbah*) open for believing men and women. If because of some weakness they are guilty of some *ẓulm* and *jahl* and then repent, God will accept their repentance and have mercy on them.

On these lines ends the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. This is one of the most difficult *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān and I have always hesitated to write its *tafsīr*. Though I had solved its complexities to the best of my knowledge many years ago, but have always remained worried

whether I would be able to pen down what I have in mind. Now, the learned readers of this book will decide whether I have been able to do justice with its difficulties or not and if yes, then to what extent. However, I have tried my best. It was my desire that I still continue deliberating on it. However, the final time has come to consign this trust to paper. So, I have written whatever I had in mind. What seems correct to them, readers may accept, and what seems amiss may best be ignored by them. A human being is *ẓalūm* and *jahūl* come what may. God is Forgiving and Ever Merciful. I beseech Him to pardon my blemishes. و آخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين (and our last statement is that gratitude is for God, Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābad
17th Shawwāl 1394 AH
3rd November 1974 AD
9 am Sunday